

Worship

IF anyone comes to public worship and leaves with the feeling that he [or she] has got nothing out of it, let him [or her] ask: Did I bring anything to it? A stubborn heart, a rebellious heart, a cold heart that cherishes its coldness, a critical mind that looks for objects of criticism, will not profit. It is true of public worship in a high degree that only they receive who give. The influence of public worship, like that of electricity, is felt only where there is a capacity for receiving it. Stone and ice are spiritual non-conductors.

– GATES OF PRAYER: THE
NEW UNION PRAYERBOOK

About This Booklet

What is worship? Why do we worship? What is going on at various times in worship, and what does it mean? Why do we worship the way we do at Kirkwood Baptist Church (KBC)? Is there a right way to worship? What am I supposed to do in worship?

These are just some of the questions people ask—and should ask—about worship. This booklet provides answers to these and other worship-related questions. The following topics are addressed.

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We hope this booklet will improve your understanding of worship—the importance of it, the why of it, the how of it, and the joy of it. Please feel free to take this booklet home with you. Read it to learn how you can worship God more joyfully.

We are moved to worship God because God's divine love excels all other loves (see hymn 558 in the pew-rack hymnal). It is poured out on us as a free gift of grace. So worship with us today in joy and thanksgiving—

*till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before God,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.*

Worship Principles

The church is not called to preserve traditions like a mausoleum or to entertain people like a coliseum. The church is the place to go to meet God.

– Paul Powell

Worship is the most important work of the church. The people of God exist to serve God. No higher service to God is possible than the worship of God.

The word “worship” derives from the Anglo-Saxon *weorthscipe*, denoting an ascription of worth, recognition of the merit of another. Essentially, worship is a verb. To worship is to express appreciation, to adore, to love, and to praise.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

– Acts of the Apostles 2.42

And on the day called Sunday, there is a meeting in one place of those who live in cities or the country, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writing of the prophets are read as long as time permits. When the reader has finished, the president [or one presiding] in a discourse urges and invites [us] to the imitation of these noble beings. Then we all stand up together and offer prayers. And, as said before, when we have finished the prayer, bread is brought, and wine and water, and the president similarly sends up prayers and thanksgiving to the best of his ability, and the congregation assents, saying the Amen; the distribution and reception of the consecrated [elements] by each one takes place, and they are sent to the absent by the deacons.

-From Justin Martyr's letter
written to the Roman
emperor in A.D. 150 in
defense of the Christian faith

Worship. Nashville: Star Song Publishing Group, 1993.

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Worship is God-focused

In authentic worship, the first focus is on God—on who God is, on what God is, on how God loves us, and on how God calls us.

The second focus is on us. In authentic worship, we look within and honestly evaluate who we are in relationship to God. The people of God are forgiven sinners: forgiven, yet sinners. Unless we are willing to admit (confess) our sin, turn away from (repent of) our sin, and ask for and accept God's forgiveness, we journey through life in denial and arrogance.

The nineteenth-century Danish philosopher/theologian Søren Kierkegaard was concerned about the attitudes toward worship and practices in worship of his time. He compared what was taking place in a theater and what was taking place in worship. In a theater, actors, prompted by people offstage, perform for the audience. To his dismay, Kierkegaard found that this theatrical model dominated the worship practices of many churches. A minister was viewed as the on-stage actor, God as the offstage prompter, and the congregation as the audience. Unfortunately, that understanding of worship is as prevalent today as it is wrong.

Each ingredient of the theatrical model mentioned by Kierkegaard is an essential

component in worship. Crucial, though, is a proper identification of the role of each one. In authentic worship, the actor is, in fact, many actors and actresses—the members of the congregation. The prompters are the people who lead in worship (ministers, choir members, instrumentalists, readers, prayers, the preacher, et al). The audience is God. Always, without exception, **the audience is God!**

Thus, worship is inappropriate if the aim is congregationally directed. A major distinction exists between worship in which people seek to please God and entertainment in which people, with God's help, seek to please other people.

All who gather for worship as God's people have the privilege and responsibility of addressing God. Prompters help, but everyone is expected to participate. No person can do worship or put on worship for another person. Every Christian is an actor or actress in the drama of worship humbly presented to God, who is its only audience and who offers the only judgment about it that matters.

Since God is the audience of our worship, we should offer our best in worship so that our worship will be authentic and heart-felt, thoughtful, and inspiring. This requires us to worship in an atmosphere of reverence and joy that is characterized by both dignity and warmth.

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owner's property. *Stewardship*, then, is comprised of the duties and service of a steward.

God is the creator of all that is and, therefore, the owner of all that is. Human beings are responsible corporately for the stewardship of God's creation, and responsible personally for that portion of it that is within their direct control.

A worshiper seeking to determine "how much of what I have is mine and how much of it belongs to God" simply does not understand the situation.

We cannot abandon our stewardship responsibilities. The only choice we have in the matter is to decide what kind of steward we will be.

Our offering plates sit on the communion table next to the cross that symbolizes Christ's great sacrifice for us, next to the lighted candles that symbolize the presence of the Holy Spirit with us, and next to the Bible that tells the story of God's love for us. What we place in the offering plate is a function of how we value these spiritual things in relation to more tangible things. Stewardship is a theological matter, not an economic one.

Each person must determine under the guidance of the Holy Spirit what comprises good stewardship. It is God whom each of us serves as a steward, not KBC. And it is God who will assess our faithfulness.

KBC's Worship Incorporates the Practices of Many Christian Traditions

The "Great Church"—the Body of Christ composed of all people who have confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior—has been gathering for two millennia to worship in many churches of many denominations in many cultures. We listen closely to the experiences of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have discovered meaningful ways to worship God. We take from these many traditions the worship practices that make for authentic worship and that will help our own congregation worship in spirit and in truth. We have discovered and come to appreciate the richness and benefit of following the unfolding drama of the Christian year, of marking time according to the sacred rather than the secular calendar. Thus, at KBC we move through the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany and After, Lent, Easter, and After Pentecost (also know as "Ordinary Time"). These seasons are described in the section entitled *The Unfolding Drama of the Christian Year*.

Baptist Christians have been gathering for nearly 400 years to worship in many churches in many cultures. We are thankful for the Baptist heritage that has nourished our congregation. Thus, we cherish the centrality of preaching, the freedom and responsibility of each person to respond to the call of God, and

the full participation of both laity and clergy in worship leadership and in ministry. Our Baptist heritage reminds us that good worship will be free and whole-hearted, making room for us to respond in unexpected ways to the often-surprising grace of God.

We have taken this broad, holistic approach to our worship for two reasons.

First, all Christians have something to contribute to the art of worship; no one denomination or church has discovered it all. Our worship is enhanced by our being open to the worship experiences and insights of other Christians.

Second, we want to help individuals and families with diverse Christian backgrounds or even no Christian background at all to experience together the wonder of worship. Some people find that our worship reminds them of the worship they remember from the Episcopalian, Methodist or Presbyterian churches of their childhood; for others, our worship feels like what they experienced in Baptist churches they have previously attended. We have found our broad approach to worship to be meaningful to individuals and families who have had diverse experiences of worship and who are now looking for a church where that diversity is respected and celebrated. For instance, Episcopalian Christians who are married to Baptist Christians are able to worship together at KBC.

God speaks through the proclaimer to the listeners.

When the preacher for the day stands among us to preach, the members of the congregation say to themselves, "Preach for us; we do not know how to speak as we ought." And when the preacher does so, the people say in their hearts, "Yes; that is it; that is our message; that is our faith!"

All worship is proclamation, at least implicitly. The sermon is explicit proclamation.

The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Rome, saying, "But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!' . . . So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ" (Romans 10.14-17).

In the sermon, the preacher brings the good news of Jesus Christ so that people may believe, and having believed, may become faithful disciples.

Stewardship – A steward is a person who has been placed in charge of property by its owner. The steward is accountable to the owner for the safe-keeping and growth in value of the

encouraged to begin offering their own gifts to God.

When we hear the prelude, we take heart. Our spirits are lifted. We prepare ourselves to worship the living God.

Procession; Processional Hymn –A procession is the ordered walking of the worship leaders into the sanctuary, normally from the narthex (in ecclesiastical architecture, the room between the main door to the outside and the main door to the sanctuary), and down the aisle to their places of worship leadership, normally on the chancel (the raised area at the front of the sanctuary from which worship is led.)

The hymn that is sung during this time is called the *Processional Hymn* and is the Hymn of Praise. Also see the question *Why do worship leaders process?* in the section entitled *Frequently Asked Questions About KBC's Worship*.

Sermon – the sermon is a proclamation of the Word of God. It is the exposition of a scripture lesson read in the worship service. It interprets and applies the scripture lesson to contemporary life.

Preaching is not a rational event, although the full faculties of the mind of both preacher and hearers are brought to bear. It is mystery;

And we seek to help those people who have not had much worship experience at all and who desire to worship in a church that has both a sense of tradition (roots) and a commitment to relevance today.

KBC is an open, inclusive church, and we reflect it in our worship of God.

Worship Involves the Whole Person

A person once asked Jesus, “Teacher, which commandment in the Old Testament law is the greatest?” Jesus answered, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest commandment” (Matthew 22.36-38).

Worship, which is an expression of our love for God, involves the whole person, every dimension of the person.

Worship involves our body. We stand up to praise and honor God and sit down to listen and reflect; we turn to those next to us to welcome them or extend the Peace of Christ; we walk with our brothers and sisters to the communion table to receive the bread and cup; we employ the senses of sight, sound and touch, the sense of taste during Holy Communion, and the sense of smell as we “hang the green” during Advent and worship on Christmas Eve.

Worship involves our mind. We give our keen attention to what we and others are

saying and singing. We discern the meaning and application of God's Word for our lives. We ponder the wonder of God's love for us and the life we are called, in response, to pursue.

Worship involves our spirit. We sense the mystery in worship we can't express with words. We experience the entire range of emotions from intense joy to profound sorrow. Our spirits soar at the thought of God's amazing grace in that while we still were sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5.8).

Our worship, then, is a balance of reason and experience, of reflection and emotion, with every dimension of each person participating equally and fully in the worship of God.

*O come let us worship and bow down,
Let us kneel before the Lord our Maker!*

-Psalm 96.6

The postlude is not "traveling music," intended to cover the noisy shuffling of people leaving the sanctuary. Instead, it is a time to reflect on what has been said and done in worship. We would benefit by remaining in our seats during the postlude to use the time for such reflection and to depart upon the conclusion of the postlude.

Prayers of the people – A worship leader prompts the congregation in praying to God, helping us give voice to our own prayers—to express our common thanksgivings, petitions, and intercessions.

Corporate-led prayer differs from private prayer. The one leading in prayer must lead our praying in a manner that is appropriate for the entire congregation. But with the prompting of the prayer leader, each of us can make our own silent thanksgivings, petitions, and intercessions to God.

Prelude – The musical prelude is the first piece of service music in a worship service. It provides us an opportunity to prepare for worship. We bring all of our concerns into a focus on God and open ourselves—to a discovery of the divine will.

The prelude is an instrumentalist's offering to God, not the congregation. By way of the prelude, members of the congregation are

do and in what sequence in a worship service. Thus, every church has a liturgy, whether it is written down or not.

A church needs to ensure that its liturgy creates authentic worship. If the congregation views themselves as spectators, there will be precious little “work of the people,” and, thus, precious little worship.

Lord’s Supper – Also called Holy Communion. See *Holy Communion* in the section entitled *Signs of the Kingdom: Baptism and Holy Communion*.

Offering; Offertory – The offering is collected after the sermon in KBC’s worship service. We have sung our praises to God, heard God’s word, and heard God’s word proclaimed. Now is our time to respond.

No word is spoken during the collection of the offering. A musical offertory is played or sung during this time to help us use the “silence” wisely by reflecting upon our many blessings and how we should share our bounty with a hurting world. It is a time to respond to God with our total being—our time, talent, and treasure. See *Stewardship* below.

Postlude – The musical postlude is the final piece of service music in a worship service. It follows the spoken benediction.

THE TYPICAL MOVEMENTS OF A KBC WORSHIP SERVICE

Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

– Hebrews 10.24-25

Baptists are part of the “Free Church” tradition. Thus, Baptist congregations have no specified way they must worship. Each congregation determines that on its own.

This section describes the movements in a typical worship service at KBC. These movements appear in the worship guide handed to worshipers as they enter the sanctuary each Sunday morning.

The Gathering

A life of faith is not lived in isolation. While faith is intensely personal, it is not private. When we come together, in a public place and as a community, we acknowledge our need for God and for one another.

During *The Gathering*, worshipers are greeted, and announcements are made about the life of the church.

The last activity in *The Gathering* is the musical prelude that provides us an opportunity

to prepare for worship. We bring all of our concerns into a focus on God and open ourselves—to a discovery of the divine will.

The prelude is an instrumentalist's offering to God, not the congregation. By way of the prelude, members of the congregation are encouraged to begin offering their own gifts to God.

When we hear the prelude, we take heart. Our spirits are lifted. We prepare ourselves to worship the living God.

The Praise of God

We begin our worship with *The Praise of God* in which we bow before the mystery of God, glorify the revelatory nature of God, magnify the majesty of God, laud the love of God, and rejoice in the presence of God.

The *Call to Worship* is an invitation to join in a conversation with God. It is a litany (see litany in the section entitled *Worship Words: Definition and Explanations*) in which the worship leader and the congregation recite alternating lines. The litany usually is based on a Psalm and addresses the worship theme for the day. It gives all present an opportunity to voice their readiness for worship.

The *Call to Worship* is followed by a *Prayer for Our Worship*. In this prayer, we give praise to God, asking God to help us worship in spirit and truth (John 4.24).

transpires in corporate worship is not the result of the whims of human opinions or the ideas of an individual's imagination but the product of obedience to the divine will discovered in the scriptures.

Litany – A litany is a form of prayer in which the clergy (worship prompters) and congregation (worshippers) take part alternately, with recitation and response. It is virtually identical with the term “responsive reading,” the difference being that a responsive reading is usually for the edification of members of the congregation, and a litany is addressed to God.

The Call to Worship in KBC's worship (see the section entitled *The Movements of a KBC Worship Service*) is a litany of praise. By using a litany, every member of the congregation can be involved in the praise of God. Since worship is the “work” of the congregation (see *liturgy* next), a litany is an appropriate and helpful way in assisting the congregation in its worship of God.

Liturgy –The word *liturgy* derives from the Greek word *leitourgia*, a term that is made up of *ergon*, meaning “work,” and *laos*, meaning “people.” Thus, literally, liturgy is “the work of the people.”

The word *liturgy* is not related to any form of worship style, although common and improper use of the word often gives a different impression. Liturgy is simply what worshippers

are an Old Testament lesson, a Gospel lesson (from one of the four Gospels in the New Testament), and an Epistle lesson (from a New Testament book other than the four Gospels). The persons who read the scripture lessons are called “lectors.”

Our call to worship (see the section entitled *The Movements of a KBC Worship Service*) is usually based on a Psalm. We read an Old Testament lesson and one or two New Testament lessons (a Gospel lesson and/or an Epistle lesson) in worship each Sunday.

“All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work” (1 Timothy 3.16-17). Thus, the eyes, ears, minds, and hearts of worshipers are to be confronted by the Bible in worship. An important way of accomplishing that is to hear the Word of God read.

Today, few people other than small children hear something read to them. But most of our Hebrew and Christian antecedents knew the Bible only by hearing it read to them, or by seeing its stories in stained-glass windows, carvings on and in their houses of worship, and pageants (church plays) in town squares. The Bible was for them a visible, audible experience.

Every aspect of the worship service exists under the authority of the Word of God. What

Having called ourselves to worship and having prayed that we might worship rightly, we sing a *Hymn of Praise* that speaks in words and in music of the wonder and majesty of God. We join with a cosmic choir to herald the greatness and goodness of God. We sing the hymn full throat. No holding back. Full organ with all stops open. Piano at fortissimo. Such is the kind of praise due our God.

Confession of Sin

During Lent and other times when we remind ourselves of the need to admit our sin and need for forgiveness, we provide a time for the corporate confession of sin. We all voice our shared failure to be all that God wants us to be. We have a time of silence when we all may silently confess our personal sins to God, promise to turn from them, and ask for God’s forgiveness. At the conclusion of the confession, we are reminded that God is a gracious God who forgives those who confess their sins, turn from them, and ask for forgiveness.

The Word of God Proclaimed

In our worship services, we proclaim the word of God in four basic ways.

We read and hear scripture lessons (See *Lesson in the Section entitled Worship Words: Definitions and Explanations*).

We sing a hymn that has a text based on the scriptures. A child once called our hymnal “the singing Bible,” and so it is.

We hear an *anthem* sung by the choir that uses scripture as its text or has a text based on scripture (see *anthem* in the section entitled *Worship Words: Definitions and Explanations*).

We hear the preaching of the word of God in a sermon (see *sermon* in the section entitled *Worship Words: Definitions and Explanations*).

The People of God Respond

Having praised God and proclaimed the word of God, we respond to God.

A worship leader prompts us to participate in the *Prayers of the People*. It is a time for all of us to offer our gratitude to God and ask God to help people in need.

A worship leader then invites people to respond in any of the following three ways by coming forward during the singing of the *Hymn of Commitment* to speak to one of our pastors in order to:

- Profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior;
- Move their membership from another church to this church; or

human life. It should be simple and metrical in form, genuinely emotional, poetic and literary in style, spiritual in quality, and in its ideas so direct and so immediately apparent as to unify a congregation while singing it.”

Lectionary –The Lectionary is an ordered system of selected scripture readings for Sunday worship. Each Sunday has four lections, which we call “lessons” in our worship guide. They are a Psalm, an Old Testament lesson, a Gospel lesson (from one of the four gospels in the New Testament), and an Epistle lesson (from a New Testament book other than the four gospels). The persons who read the scripture lessons are called “lectors.”

The Lectionary provides a three-year cycle of weekly texts chosen so that the major themes of the entire biblical revelation are proclaimed in the three-year cycle.

Our church’s senior pastor uses the Lectionary as a guide. Most Sundays’ scripture texts and preaching are based on the Lectionary texts for the day. However, the senior pastor is free to and does preach on other texts and themes based upon current needs in the life of the congregation.

See the definition and explanation of *Lesson* that follows.

Lesson – A lesson is a reading of a passage of scripture in a worship service. The lessons

While every member of the church is a minister, deacons are those “called out” by the church to lead in such ministries.

Deacon candidates are nominated and elected to office by the church members who see in the candidates the necessary spiritual gifts for deacon ministry. They serve three-year terms, at which time they “rotate off” the active deacon body. They become eligible again for nomination and election after a one-year interval.

Deacons are ordained by the church to the deacon ministry in a service of ordination. To be ordained means to be seen by the congregation as gifted for the deacon ministry and then “set apart” by the congregation for that ministry.

Each week, a deacon is designated *Deacon for the Week* on a rotating schedule. The deacon for the week prays the offertory prayer in the worship service and introduces to the members of the congregation after the service those who have come for church membership that day. The deacon for the week also assists the senior pastor during the week in various ministries as requested.

Hymn – The Hymn Society Of America defines a Christian hymn as “a lyric poem, reverently and devotionally conceived, that is designed to be sung and that expresses the worshiper’s attitude toward God or God’s purposes in

- Ask for assistance in knowing what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

We also invite everyone to respond quietly to what they have experienced in worship with the goal of conforming their lives more closely to the life of Jesus Christ.

We sometimes stand and state together a Confession or Affirmation of Faith. This is, in essence, a personal and corporate renewal of faith.

We receive the offering. We do not ask that worshipers give to help this church meet its annual budget. We ask worshipers to give to enable this church, which *is* the worshipers, to share the Gospel in our community and around the world. We ask that worshipers give because we worship a giving God and need to have God’s giving nature in our own lives. We collect our offerings of money, and we also ask that worshipers make an offering to God of themselves—of all that they are. This involves the giving of our time and talent for kingdom work. Ultimately, at issue in the offering is what will be given to God, not this church. See *Offering; Offertory and Stewardship* in the section entitled *Worship Words: Definitions and Explanations*.

Benediction: Leaving in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord

Worship transforms us so that we may join with God in transforming the world. Thus, worship is always concluded with a *Benediction* or blessing. Worshipers are dismissed in Christ's name and with assurances of his grace.

God is the author of this blessing. A worship leader only reminds people of its reality. God remains close to members of the community of faith whether they are gathered or scattered. The blessing is not a magical formula; it is a biblical fact. God is for us. God is with us as we go into the world for another week. See *Benediction* in the section entitled *Worship Words: Definitions and Explanations*.

Baptism and Holy Communion

We administer Baptism and celebrate Holy Communion in some of our worship services. See the section entitled *Signs of The Kingdom: Baptism and Holy Communion* for information on these two "signs of the kingdom."

were dismissed in his name and with assurances of his grace. Worship in the early church invariably ended with a blessing.

A blessing at the end of a worship service grows out of a responsible theology of providence and bears witness to the total significance of the Christian faith. God is the author of the blessing. A worship leader only reminds people of its reality. The peace of God can be experienced anywhere in the world as well as in a church sanctuary. God remains close to members of the community of faith whether they are gathered or scattered. The blessing is not a magical formula; it is a biblical fact. God is for us. God is with us.

Several examples of spoken and sung benedictions can be found in the pew-rack hymnal: nos. 834-845.

Communion, Holy – see Holy Communion in the section entitled *Signs Of The Kingdom: Baptism And Holy Communion*.

Deacon, Deacon for the Week – Deacons are lay men and women responsible in assigned ways for the spiritual welfare of the congregation and for ministry to those in need. Hospital visitation, assistance to the households of those who are hospitalized, and assistance to households who have lost a loved one to death are examples of deacon ministries.

to the reading of a scripture lesson (see *Lesson* below).

An anthem is *not* an “interlude” in the service or something that is done to create sound while silent components of the service are underway, such as the collection of the offering. Anthems are components of the worship service that prompt the worshipers in their worshipping.

An anthem is chosen not only for its musical excellence, but because it will make a relevant contribution to an act of worship. The heart of the anthem is the text; the music setting serves to enhance our hearing of the text by giving it the added life and meaning that only music can provide.

It is the anthem text that sometimes prompts from one or more worshipers an *Amen* (so be it, LORD!).

Baptism – see *Baptism* in the section entitled *Signs Of The Kingdom: Baptism And Holy Communion*.

Benediction – Biblical worship is always concluded with a benediction, also called a *blessing*. In the Old Testament, the blessing was voiced by the priests and was intended to convey to individuals the truth that the power of the worshipping assembly would go with each of them personally. In the New Testament, Christ was celebrated as the blessing. Worshipers

THE UNFOLDING DRAMA OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

The great benefit of the Christian year is that the worshipping church is able to follow a rich and meaningful way of orienting its life around the work of Jesus Christ, marking those particular events in which God’s saving purposes were made known.

Secularization shifts the way we see and understand things and people. There was a time when the idea of mystery was more a part of our thinking than it is now. God was high, holy, and lifted up. In worship there was a sense of awe and reverence in the presence of the one who is wholly other. But our culture encourages us to reason God out of existence or to reduce God to clichés and formulas.

Secularism lacks a supernatural view of the personality. It seeks to define a person in terms of economics, thought, or production rather than in terms of the biblical view that tells us that we are created in the image of God.

Worship is an antidote to secularism. Worship is rooted in an event that is to be lived, not proven. The purpose of worship is not to prove the Christ it celebrates, but to bring the worshiper so in tune with God’s reconciliation through Christ that his life, death, and resurrection become a lived experience. And telling and acting out the living, dying, and

rising of Christ through celebration in worship makes the event real in the here and now.

Life is not an intellectual construct, but a journey. When our life story is brought up into the story of Christ's life, death, and resurrection, it gains meaning and purpose.

This is why KBC follows the Christian calendar that celebrates the saving events of God in Jesus Christ by marking those particular events in which God's saving purposes were made known. We reenact the drama of the Greatest Story Ever Told. And as we do, we are lifted out of a secular existence and linked with that common set of memories that belong to the Christian family.

The following paragraphs describe the seasons of the Christian year that trace the life of Christ.

Advent: A Season of Waiting

The Christian year does not begin on January 1 as it does on the secular calendar. Rather, it begins four Sundays before Christmas with the season of Advent (from the Latin *adventus*, "coming"), a season that calls for expectant waiting and readiness for the coming Christ. There is a simultaneous importance of both penitence and hope, of both remorse and rejoicing.

Biblical themes stressed during Advent include the many Old Testament prophecies of

Worship Words: Definitions and Explanations

Amen – the word *Amen* is a Hebrew word for giving assent or emphasis to what has been said, sung, or played. When we say *Amen* at the end of a prayer or at any other time, we are saying, *So be it!* And we are saying our *Amen* to God, not to a worship leader.

The proper congregational response to something in worship is not applause, but "Amen!" (see the question *Why don't we applaud in worship?* In the section entitled *Frequently Asked Questions About KBC's Worship*). *Amens* can be said individually and corporately.

We encourage all people to say *Amen* at the end of all corporate prayers in worship. And all worshipers are free to say *Amen* after any other element of the worship service "as the Spirit moves them."

Anthem – the word *anthem* is the English form of the word *antiphon*, originally a text sung alternately by two choirs. An anthem is a choral musical setting of a biblical text or a text based upon the biblical revelation in the worship services of the Church.

Sometimes the text of an anthem causes it to "rest on its own" in the service. Sometimes the text makes it an appropriate sung response

Why do worship leaders process?

A procession in a worship service serves as a symbol for a reality of the church: the worship leaders (pastors, choir, and others) take their positions by moving forward from among the worshipping community.

Processionals also provide an air of festivity appropriate for significant festival days of the Christian year. Some of these special days are advent Sundays; Epiphany Sunday; Palm Sunday (that also includes our children in worship leadership as they wave palm branches); Maundy Thursday and good Friday (silent processionals that set a somber tone appropriate for those days); and Easter Sunday.

Why do people “dress up” for worship?

Most human cultures have “reserved dress” i.e., special clothes for important occasions. What we wear says something about the significance of what we are doing. In keeping with the idea that worship is important people at KBC wear “Sunday clothes.”

the coming of the Messiah and of the Lord’s impending judgment against sin. Thus, Advent celebrates the anticipation of both the “first coming” of Christ at his incarnation and his “coming again” as judge of the world (Acts of the Apostles 17.31) and vindicator of his faithful witnesses (Revelation 6.9). We focus during Advent on the prophetic cry: “see, your king comes to you” (Zechariah 9.9 and Matthew 21.5).

An Advent wreath is used throughout the season. The ring is covered with evergreen foliage; four purple candles are on the ring’s circumference, and a white Christ-candle is at the center. The first purple candle is lighted on the first Sunday of Advent and each Advent Sunday thereafter; the second candle is lighted on the second Sunday, and so on until all four purple candles are lighted on the fourth Sunday of Advent. Each successive candle represents a step toward the realization of Jesus’ birth as related in the scripture lessons for the day. The Christ-candle is lighted on Christmas Eve as we usher in the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus.

The color purple is employed in worship. It is the color historically worn by those who reign and symbolizes the sovereign role of the coming Jesus.

Christmas: A Season of Fulfillment

Christmas is the celebration of the birth of the savior and calls attention to the mystery of the incarnation, the vulnerable participation and involvement of God in the human scene. The season lasts twelve days, beginning with Christmas day that is ushered in with a Christmas Eve service, and ends on the eve of Epiphany (described next).

Biblical themes stressed during Christmas include the infancy narratives of Matthew's and Luke's Gospels that tell of the visitation to the virgin Mary, Mary's response (the Magnificat), the birth of Jesus, and the announcement to the shepherds "abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2.8 KJV). All aspects of Christ's birth strike a responsive chord in all who struggle in a world that exalts wealth and position.

Like the shepherds returning from the manger of the Christ-child, we glorify God for what we have seen and heard, in the realization that through all this "the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory" (John 1.14) in the incarnate mystery of Emmanuel, which means "God is with us" (Matthew 1.23). There is an unexplained wonder and gripping power in the New Testament's proclamation that the eternal son, through whom all things were created (Hebrews 1.2), should lay aside his glory and

sound and fury. It offers us a time to know "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, that guards our minds and hearts in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4.7).

What happens at vespers services?

We have special vespers services from time to time. These services are a time of hymn-singing and Bible study in an informal setting.

Examples are youth-led services; children's music programs; and advent services involving the "hanging of the green" and Christmas music, often with an orchestra. We also observe Holy Communion each Sunday during Lent.

Some people who are active in other churches that do not have a Sunday evening worship service attend our vespers services because of their setting and tone.

Who plans worship services, and how is that done?

The pastoral staff plans our worship services. They consider the seasons of the Christian year (see the section entitled *The Unfolding Drama of the Christian Year*), the needs in the life of the church at any given time, and the *Lectionary* texts for the day (see a definition of *Lectionary* in the section entitled *Worship Words: Definitions and Explanations*).

will exercise the spiritual *discipline* of silence soon learn its profound benefits.

A Minister of Music in a Baptist church that has a large, glorious choir tells the story of a woman he had seen slipping into the back of the church several weeks to worship. She was a new face to him, so he went to meet her after a service.

She said, “I appreciate the fine music you have here that helps me worship, and the preaching is very helpful too. But that’s not why I’ve been coming. I’ve been coming for the moment of silence you have in your service. You see, I’m the working, single mother of three busy children. My job and my role as a mother and head of my household is exhausting—a constant whirl of activity and noise. The moment of silence in your worship service is the only time I have all week to be quiet and just *be*. And it gives me time to reflect and take into my soul what has happened in worship that day.”

A component of authentic worship is a time of silence. Silence in worship is far more than the absence of sound. Silence constitutes a vital part of the divine-human dialogue. In silence, worshipers can experience interchanges with God that will not be known where silence does not prevail.

We provide time in our worship for quiet reflection and contemplation. Spiritual silence, used aright, is an antidote for our addiction to

empty himself, “taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Philippians 2.6-7).

The color white is employed in worship. It is the color for all days in the Christian year centered on Christ. White symbolizes purity and joy.

Epiphany and After: A Season of Revelation

The name *Epiphany* comes from a Greek word meaning “manifestation” or “appearance.” The Epiphany of Christ is a celebration of his revelation to the peoples of the world.

The Epiphany season follows Christmas and ends on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday (the day that begins the season of Lent, described next). Epiphany itself occurs on January 6 and is celebrated in worship on the Sunday preceding January 6 when that date isn’t a Sunday.

The biblical theme stressed during Epiphany is the revelation of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, represented in scripture by the “wise men” or magi, who made a long journey sometime after the birth of Jesus to see the “King of the Jews” (Matthew 2.1-12).

In the imagery of Epiphany, the magi represent the Gentiles, to whom the savior is now revealed. They are, in fact, the first people said to “worship” (bow down to) Christ. The union of Jew and Gentile in the new covenant

of Christ is the great mystery celebrated by the apostle Paul. Although the meaning of Jesus Christ and his embodiment of the new covenant, the kingdom of God, cannot be fully understood apart from the background of the faith of Israel, neither can it be understood apart from its universal significance for people of all cultures and ethnic groups. During the season of Epiphany, we remind ourselves of this truth and of Christ's Great Commission (Matthew 28.18-20) to us for worldwide evangelization.

The color white is employed in worship on Epiphany Sunday to symbolize the light, faith, and glory so integral to the day. The color green is employed on the following Sundays to symbolize growth, life, and hope.

Lent: A Season of Preparation

The name *Lent* comes from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning "spring," the "lengthening" of days with the approach of the vernal equinox. The season begins with Ash Wednesday and runs through holy week (described next). It lasts 40 days (not counting the Sundays during the season since all Sundays are feast days and never fast days).

Lent is the season of preparation before Easter. Noah and his family were in the ark for 40 days in preparation for "starting over;" Moses spent forty years preparing for his

spirit moves them." Again, this maintains God as the audience; the worship leaders as prompters, not performers; and the congregation, who voice the *Amen*, as the worshipers.

Why are there periods of silence in our worship services?

We live amidst a cacophony of noise pollution and distractions. We have become addicted to it. The television is on, even when we're not in the room, as background noise, lest there be quiet. We live in a time saturated with information but short on Gospel reflection.

Some people actually fear silence. Every moment of their day must be filled with sound. Noise seems to provide security. Such a passion for sound makes virtually impossible quiet moments of personal introspection that can produce redemptive, even if discomfiting, honesty.

We often find it difficult to take a corrective step, to stop for a moment of silence that would give us a momentary oasis of quiet and peace.

All the masters of the interior life speak of silence. Most of the spiritual disciplines that nourish and grow us as disciples involve simplicity and quiet. We need that. In our culture, there is little danger that we'll overdo it!

The main purpose of silence in the Christian life is to be able to see and hear. Those who

congregation) and prompters (worship leaders).

One can verify that applause in our culture is directed to a performer for a performance by assessing when and to whom applause is directed in those congregations that encourage it. Applause is usually given for musical “performances.” Applause is not given to those who lead in prayer, especially to those who pray prayers of confession! Those collecting the offering receive no applause. This is because a musical number is (inappropriately) seen as a performance while a prayer or the offering is seen as an act of worship.

A proper understanding of worship and the roles of the worship leaders, congregation, and God (the worshiping community’s audience) will give one pause about applause.

The proper congregational response to something in worship is to say, “*Amen!*” This can be done individually and corporately. The word *Amen* is a Hebrew word for giving assent or emphasis to what has been said, sung, or played. When we say *Amen* at the end of a prayer, we are saying, *So be it!* And to whom is our *Amen* directed? It is directed to God, our audience. When we say *Amen* to God, we are saying, *So be it, LORD!*

We encourage all people to say *Amen* at the end of all corporate prayers in worship. And all worshipers are free to say *Amen* after any other element of the worship service “as the

mission; the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for forty years in preparation for entering Promised Land; Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness preparing for his earthly ministry.

Careful self-examination is the word for this season, starting on Ash Wednesday when we hear the words: “remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3.19). We “deny ourselves” as Israel was directed to do for the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23.27 & 29). We remember that our sin created the necessity of Jesus’ death; thus, we give special attention to confession and repentance in preparation for the events reenacted in holy week.

It has long been the practice of the Great Church not to say or sing the liturgy’s *Alleluias* during the Lenten season. This change serves to remind us that we are in a season of repentance and on a journey with Jesus to the Cross. In our church, we remove the offertory response from our Lenten liturgy.

The color purple is employed in worship during Lent. The dark color symbolizes the seriousness of sin and the sorrow that lies ahead.

Holy Week

Holy Week is the last week of the Lenten season (see above), but is so significant that it merits its own section in this booklet.

Holy Week commemorates the final events that led to the death of Jesus. In this week, we recall the *passion* of Christ. The term *passion*, from the Latin *passus*, refers to the suffering of Jesus leading up to his crucifixion. This suffering was not only physical, but also spiritual in that Jesus was rejected by those unfaithful to the covenant. Three major worship services are held during Holy Week.

Palm Sunday begins Holy Week and commemorates Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, riding on a young donkey, which the Gospel writers relate to Zechariah's prophecy of the king coming in humility (Zechariah 9.9). We reenact the event by processing with palm branches and the singing of hosannas. The word *hosanna* means "save" or "deliver." The palm branches are then stored. They become dry and brittle. Then they are brought out of storage and burned, and the ash residue is used in the next ash Wednesday service.

Maundy Thursday takes its name from the Latin *mandatum novum*, "a new commandment," given by Jesus to his disciples as he washed their feet on that evening: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one

Why don't we applaud during a worship service?

The first section of this booklet, entitled *Worship Principles*, reminds us of who in worship plays the parts of on-stage actor, off-stage prompter, and audience. In authentic worship, the actor is, in fact, many actors and actresses—the members of the congregation. The prompters are the people who lead in worship (ministers, choir members, instrumentalists, readers, the preacher, *et al*). The audience is God. Always, without exception, **the audience is God!**

Thus, worship is inappropriate (and spiritually dangerous) if the aim is congregationally directed. A major distinction exists between worship in which people seek to please God and entertainment in which people, with God's help, seek to please other people.

In our culture, applause is given to a performer for a good performance. But worship leaders, which include vocal and instrumental musicians, are prompters, not performers. In a theater, the actors do not applaud a prompter during a performance. Instead, the actors tell the prompter after the performance how grateful they are for the good prompting that allowed them to perform so well. So it should be in church with worshipers (the

and shows the limits to which God went to redeem us. We need to see the cross in our worship services to remind us of this central tenet of our faith. We see it on our communion table, and we see it “writ large” on the back wall of our baptistery, “high and lifted up.”

The candles remind us of the Holy Spirit’s presence in our worship services. The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was accompanied by “tongues, as of fire, resting on each apostle’s head” (Acts of the Apostles 2.3).

The Bible is the inspired revelation of God’s will and way. It gives witness to the mighty acts of God in self-revelation and redemption, all brought to fulfillment in the life, teachings, and saving work of Jesus Christ. In its unique and unified disclosure of the will of God for humankind, the Bible is the final authority in pointing persons to Christ and in guiding them in all matters of Christian faith and moral duty.

To sum up, the Bible—the written word of God—sits on our communion table, front and center. Candles burn beside it, reminding us that “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119.105 KJV). The cross of the Christ, to whom the Bible gives witness and who is the living word of God, stands over it.

another” (John 13.34). We recall in worship the events that transpired between Jesus and his disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem on the eve of his crucifixion where they shared the Jewish Passover meal, what Christians came to call “The Last Supper.”

Good Friday is the anniversary of Christ’s crucifixion. The term may be derived from the expression “God’s Friday.” An evening Tenebrae service (a Latin word meaning “shadows” or “darkness”) incorporates the gradual extinction of lights and candles with the service concluding in complete darkness, symbolic of Christ’s death and burial in a grave. On Good Friday, all eyes focus on the Cross.

Easter: A Season of Celebration

Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever.

– Revelation 1.17-18

Easter is the oldest and grandest of all Christian festivals. The season of “fifty great days” runs from Easter Sunday through Pentecost. The season is characterized by joy, praise, and thanksgiving.

The *Alleluias* return to the liturgy of the great church on Easter Sunday, heightening the

celebration of that day. In our church, the offertory response returns and is sung with joy and thanksgiving to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord.

Without Easter, Christianity could claim no authority and offer no promise. The entire Christian year would crumble like an old, discarded calendar because there would be no story of redemption to tell, no meaningful faith to nurture, and no holy pilgrimage to guide. A reason to celebrate Easter *does* exist, however; Christ is risen!

The color white is employed during Easter (except for Pentecost) symbolizing the purity of the risen Christ. The sudden joy of white provides a sharp contrast to the dark colors of the preceding week.

Pentecost: A Day of Empowerment

Pentecost is the last day of the Easter season (see above), but is such a significant day that it merits its own section in this booklet.

The name *Pentecost* means “fifty,” referring to the fifty days after Passover when the Jews celebrated the feast of weeks, the agricultural festival that celebrated the end of the barley season and the beginning of the wheat harvest.

In the Christian calendar, the day is associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the church.

bound together in their common confession that Jesus is Lord, and bound to one another as sisters and brothers in the journey of Christian life. The stories of scripture are often shown in visible form on banners. Some of our banners have angels in their design; the angels soar over the choir loft during late-advent, depicting the angels who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds: “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy!” (Luke 2.10 KJV). Other scriptures are depicted in visible form on banners in the same manner and for the same reason that the biblical story has been depicted for centuries in stained-glass windows.

We place a cross, candles, and a Bible on our communion table that sits in front of the pulpit and, thus, is always visible to worshipers.

The cross reminds us of the centrality of Jesus’ sacrificial death for us and for our salvation. The apostle Paul reminded the church at Corinth in one of his letters to them of how he had chosen to bring them the Gospel. He said, “I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2.1-2). Some of the favorite hymns of many of our members are about the cross: the *Old Rugged Cross*; *When I Survey The Wondrous Cross*; *Beneath The Cross Of Jesus*; *Were You There*; *And Lift High The Cross*. The cross is at the center of our faith

the feel of a prickly piece of holly to tease our sense of touch. Visual images linger in our memories long after a word or phrase has been lost to us.

Sight monopolizes the senses. Seventy percent of our sensory perception comes through our eyes. The “look” of a sanctuary instantly communicates insights into a congregation’s view of worship—everything from the architectural design of the room to the floral arrangements to the communion table to the clothes/robes the worship leaders wear to the banners on display. Therefore, our worship experience is shaped greatly by what we see.

In authentic worship, we see symbols of the realities of our faith—symbols that teach and remind us of the character of our Triune God and the biblical revelation. And we need to remove all sights (and sounds) that detract from that goal.

We use paraments (pulpit scarf, communion table runner, and Bible bookmark) to show the liturgical colors that remind us of the theological mood for the season. The traditional color of each season and its meaning is described in the section entitled *The Unfolding Drama of the Christian Year*.

Banners also provide color, but, more importantly, they depict the symbols of our faith. The design of our Pentecost banner is a symbol of what a local church is to be: a fellowship and community of people who are

On the day of Pentecost, multitudes from many countries were gathered in Jerusalem for the celebration of the Jewish festival. Suddenly, from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared and rested on each apostle and they were filled with the Holy Spirit (empowered) and began to speak in other languages, as the spirit gave them ability. And the multitude of people heard them speaking in the native language of each (see Acts of the Apostles 2.1-6).

On Pentecost, we celebrate the birth of the church and its mission to share the Gospel with all people everywhere in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pentecost ushers in the following and last season of the Christian year.

The color red is employed on Pentecost to symbolize the tongues of fire that rested that day on the heads of the apostles.

After Pentecost: a season of growth

The first half of the Christian year, which sequentially presents events in the life of Christ, ends with Pentecost. The season between Pentecost and Advent is the season “After Pentecost,” also known as “Ordinary Time.”

During the After Pentecost season, we realize that we are living in the Age of the

Church in which we seek to live out the gospel in light of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit that birthed the church, all reenacted in the preceding seasons of the Christian year.

The color green is employed during this time, symbolizing a season of growth and maturity.

Key festival days in the Christian year

Key festival days occur throughout the Christian year. Some have been described above in the overview of the seasons of the Christian year. These are Christmas, Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maunday Thursday, Good Friday, Easter, and Pentecost.

Trinity Sunday

Trinity Sunday is the first Sunday after Pentecost and is held in honor of the Holy Trinity. It serves as a capstone to the portion of the Christian year that celebrates the major events of the Christian revelation. It is the only major observance of the Christian year dedicated to a doctrine rather than to an event.

Frequently Asked Questions About KBC's Worship

Why do the clergy wear robes?

The clergy wear robes for the same reason the choir members do. Robes play down the individual personalities of the clergy and choir members, enabling the congregation to focus more readily on them as worship leaders, undistracted by their choice of clothing fashion for the day. The stole worn with the clergy robe is a symbol of the yoke of discipleship (Matthew 11.28-30), reminding us that the clergy fulfill their roles under the authority of the one whose yoke they wear. The color of the stole is the one designated for the current season of the Christian year and matches the color of the paraments (described below).

Why do we use paraments and banners, and why is there a cross, candles, and a Bible on our communion table?

We learn and are affected emotionally primarily through our senses. Seeing a Christmas tree may cause the music of a carol to float through the mind, the flavor of a traditional fruit cake to tempt our taste buds, the odor of fresh-cut evergreens to tantalize our sense of smell, and

reflecting the character of the gospel in the honesty and integrity of its craftsmanship.”

If we are to be true to the gospel in song, we must sing the most honest, insightful, theologically-sound texts set to the best melodies and harmonies and arrangements. Whether the hymns or anthems sung each week are time-honored or newly-penned, whether they are “heart songs” or “head songs,” each choice must be held up in light of its own merits and how it fits into the overall scheme of its singing or playing.

World Communion Sunday

World Communion Sunday developed in the twentieth century as a way to encourage all Christians of all traditions (denominations) to celebrate Holy Communion on the same day at least annually. It is celebrated on the first Sunday in October. While the day is not part of the traditional Christian calendar, it has a special value as a reminder of each local congregation’s oneness with the universal church, the Body of Christ.

Jesus prayed for such unity among his own in all eras, as a reflection of his own unity with God (John 17.20-22), and the apostle Paul proclaimed, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4.5). In relationship to Holy Communion, he declared that “we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Corinthians 10.17). World Communion Sunday helps remind us of this truth.

All Saints’ Day

All believers are called “saints” in scripture. Paul begins a letter to the church at Corinth this way: To the church of God that is in Corinth, including all the saints throughout Achaia (2 Corinthians 1.1). He begins his letter to the church at Philippi in a similar manner: to

all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi (Philippians 1.1).

All Saints' Day is on November 1 and usually celebrated on the following Sunday when that date is not a Sunday. This day was formerly known in Great Britain as "All Hallows Day." Thus, the preceding day was "All Hallows Eve" from which the term *Halloween* is derived.

On this day, we remember and commemorate the communion of saints known and unknown, the cloud of witnesses to the faith with whom God has surrounded us (Hebrews 12.1).

We remember especially our beloved family members and friends who are no longer with us, and who gave their love to us, the church, and the world.

Festival of the Reigning Christ

This festival day originated in 1925 and is celebrated on the last Sunday of the Christian year and, as such, proclaims the goal toward which human history moves: the universal reign of Jesus Christ.

The day has its foundation in the biblical vision of God's "plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth" (Ephesians 1.10).

The apostle Paul gave us at Philippians 2.9-11 a portion of a hymn text of the earliest

3. Free Church worship is centered in personal redemption and, thus, its song cannot be repressed. "The gospel is for all. It is personally offered, personally received, personally celebrated, and personally spread. The joy of the Lord translates quickly into song, and the redeemed cannot help but take it up frequently, spontaneously, and above all, corporately."

4. All presentations of music are acceptable—solo offerings, anthems by trained ensembles, and the singing of hymns by the gathered congregation.

5. Newness and repetition are equally welcome. Scripture commands us to both "sing a new song" and at the same time to "sing one of the [familiar] songs of Zion."

A tension has always existed between concert music and worship music with a debate not so much over their purpose as over the spirit of each. The primary purpose of music in the church is to enable the people to praise God; this lofty goal requires that church musicians exercise great care and apply every skill in their preparation. Carl Schalk says, "the church's song is to speak the gospel clearly and unequivocally through musical vehicles

society. Its singing is not a concert. But from inner, material necessity it sings. . . . What we can and must say quite confidently is that the community which does not sing is not the community.”

The church’s song can be a song of praise, with most obvious roots in the Psalms. It can be deeply introspective and cleansing and, as such, exist as prayer. The church’s song can be proclamation, as expressed by the apostle Paul—“be filled with the spirit, addressing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5.18-19). In a less obvious but profound way, the church’s song can exist as story—a recounting of the mighty deeds of God from one end of history to the other.

Baptists are part of the Free Church tradition. Music in this tradition is rich and diverse with only a handful of basic distinctives:

1. We hold that making music fulfills a commandment rather than existing as a luxury, an option, or a practice reserved for the trained professional. Consequently, congregational song is at the center of free worship, in all its forms: hymns, gospel songs, and scripture songs.
2. Christians are commanded to make music first to God as an act of worship—an offering—and then to each other and the world.

church that speaks to what we celebrate this day:

God also highly exalted Jesus and gave him the name that is above every name.

So that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on the earth,

Every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the father.

Amen!

SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM: BAPTISM AND HOLY COMMUNION

We have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.

– Romans 6.4

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

– Matthew 26.26-28

Some realities are so wonderful and so powerful that they cannot be expressed by words alone; they require symbols. Symbols are signs that point beyond themselves to a great and mysterious reality.

This section provides a common understanding for two of the key symbols of the church.

explained why the church has so many hymns and Psalms “where message and music join to move the listener’s soul, while in other living beings and bodies music remains a language without words.”

When music and text are combined, the music “no longer expresses the action or the words themselves, but something which goes much deeper.” This is the new dimension celebrated by Fred Pratt Green in a hymn exalting the glorification of God through music:

*When in our music God is glorified,
And adoration leaves no room for pride,
It is as if the whole creation cried,
Alleluia!
Often, making music, we have found
A new dimension in the world of sound,
As worship moved us to a more
profound Alleluia!*

A new entity is indeed created when words are put to music, both in the case of hymns—the music of the church which moves the worshiper from observation to participation—and in music sung by choirs where more musical expertise is required.

Music in worship serves many purposes and employs a variety of expressions, all of which are a gift of God. An important twentieth-century theologian, Karl Barth, wrote, “the Christian community sings. It is not a choral

Worship Through Music

*I will sing of your steadfast love, o Lord,
forever;*

*With my mouth I will proclaim your
faithfulness to all generations.*

– Psalm 89.1

Music has played a vital and prominent role in nearly every service of Christian worship ever conducted—in any culture, period of history, or worship tradition. It has accompanied every liturgical act and has been used to express every emotion.

Music in worship is not an end in itself; rather, it is a means by which the Gospel is proclaimed and by which the people respond. It may be the most universal way for rendering Christian liturgy. Music has great power to reflect and shape human experience. In worship, as in other activities, music expresses the most profound thoughts and emotions in ways that words cannot.

Music in Christian worship is a powerful—even a risky—force that must be used thoughtfully, imaginatively, and prayerfully. The powers of language are magnified when married to music and used as a vehicle for praise. Martin Luther was certain that the “fathers and prophets wanted nothing else to be associated as closely with the word of God as music” (*Works*, vol. 53). This is how he

Baptism

Baptism is an outward expression, or sign, of an inward experience; the outward sign has meaning only when connected with the inward experience. Those who have accepted salvation through faith are baptized by immersion in water “in the name of the father, and of the son, and of the Holy Spirit,” the Trinitarian formula given by our Lord in his great commission to us (Matthew 28.19-20).

Christian baptism has its origins in the various Jewish rites of ritual purification and in John’s baptism of repentance. Christian baptism differs from its antecedents, however, in important respects. It is baptism in the name of “the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” signifying a belonging to Jesus as Lord and Savior, and is associated with the gifting of the Holy Spirit. In baptism, believers proclaim, relive, and depict their participation in Christ’s death and resurrection and are incorporated into the new covenant people of God, the Church.

The English word *baptism* derives from the Greek verb *baptizo*, which means “dip” or “cause to perish” by drowning or sinking (as a ship).

Our understanding of baptism flows from our understanding of the Church. One does not become a Christian and, thus, a member of the church by being born into a Christian home or into a so-called Christian nation or culture.

Rather, one becomes a Christian and, thus, a member of the Church by making a credible profession of repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Thus, we affirm a Believers' Church, or the Gathered Community (of believers gathered out of the world).

Therefore, we administer baptism only to those who have made a responsible and credible profession of repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Baptism of believers by immersion is in accordance with and sets forth the central facts of the Gospel. We value the experience and symbolism of immersion following the apostle Paul's teaching: "Do you not know that all who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6.3-4). We believe immersion to be the best mode to experience and symbolize the truth of the death of our former selves and our rebirth and resurrection as new people. And it is acknowledged by all that immersion was the mode of baptism in the New Testament Church and in the earliest period of the post-New Testament Church.

But as much as we value the mode of immersion for baptism, it is a credible and responsible profession of faith on the part of

and seek to nurture toward faith as we promised at their child dedication.

We come forward down the center aisle to receive the bread and cup and return with the elements to our pews via the outside aisles so that all may eat and drink together after everyone has been served. Our walking together to the communion table provides another powerful symbol. We all walk together on a common journey. We meet face-to-face with our pastors who shepherd us, and they give us a blessing, up close and personal, eye-to-eye.

One person in our congregation put it this way: "I never walk forward during Holy Communion without thinking of the time I walked forward in a church aisle to profess my faith as the congregation sang the hymn *Just As I Am*. I always say silently as I walk forward to receive the elements, 'Lord, here I come again, just as I am. Thank you for accepting me that way, and make me into something more.'"

As a means of grace to the believer and to the church, as a sober searching of one's heart, as a thankful remembrance of Christ and his sacrificial death on the cross, as a blessed assurance of his return, and as a joyous fellowship with the living Christ and his people—we treasure this "sign of the kingdom."

bread is not literally the body of Jesus, but I'm always careful how I chew."

We include Holy Communion as part of a worship service about once a month. We also include it at other times, such as at each vespers service during Lent and at the Maundy Thursday and Christmas Eve worship services.

Some who come to our church from other Christian traditions, such as the Christian (Disciples of Christ), Episcopalian, and Roman Catholic churches, are used to Holy Communion being a part of most if not all worship services. Thus, it sometimes seems to them that we schedule Holy Communion too infrequently. Some who have come from still other Christian traditions, as well as from other Baptist churches, feel that Holy Communion is scheduled too frequently. We seek to schedule Holy Communion so that all in our diverse congregation can find it meaningful.

Who may partake of Holy Communion? We use the Lord's standard since we are steward's of the Lord's Table, not our own. All followers of Jesus Christ from all Christian traditions are welcome at the table. We also encourage parents to bring to the table their small children who have not yet professed Jesus as Lord and savior and been baptized. We give the children fish crackers—not as an element of Holy Communion, but as a token that they are an important part of our faith family whom we love

the candidate for baptism that we hold to be essential to baptism.

As each candidate is baptized, the church sees reenacted before it the death and resurrection of the Lord, and looks upon a re-born person who has become a child of God and a member of Christ's Church. We also are reminded of our own baptism and the decision to follow Jesus that led us into the waters to reenact symbolically our new birth.

As a means of grace to the believer and to the church and as an act of obedience to our Lord's command, we treasure this "sign of the kingdom."

Parent-Child Dedication Differs From Baptism

We do not baptize infants for the reasons stated above, and because we believe that from birth all children are within the love and care of God and, therefore, within the love and saving grace of Christ; thus, we have never been troubled by any distinction between baptized and unbaptized children.

We further believe it is the responsibility of Christian parents, with the help of their entire church family, to nurture their children in the Christian faith so that in time they will choose to make a credible and responsible profession of faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and savior. To this end, we hold a ceremony called *Child Dedication*.

In this ceremony, parents make public promises to God, in the presence of their church family, to nurture their child in the Christian faith. The church family likewise makes public promises to God and to the parents to assist them in this holy endeavor. And the senior pastor, along with the entire church, blesses the child and offers prayers for the parents, for the child, and for the church as we seek to help the parents nurture the child in faith. In this way, we consider the entire church to be god-parents or sponsors of each child.

Holy Communion

Holy Communion, also called the Lord's Supper, is celebrated through the symbols of the bread and cup, is an honest searching of one's heart, a thankful remembrance of Christ and his sacrificial death on the Cross, a blessed assurance of his return, and a joyous fellowship with the living Christ and his people. It is an act of fellowship, a community meal.

It is more than a commemoration in which we "proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11.26). Here the grace of God is offered and is received in faith; here the real presence of Christ is manifest in the joy and peace both of the believers and the community; here we are in communion (a translation of the Greek word *koinonia*), not only with members in our Church, but with the

church of all times and places and with our risen and glorified Lord.

The New Testament writers make three basic references to Holy Communion that give us insight into its nature.

It is an occasion of thanksgiving (Acts of the Apostles 2.46). The Greek word *eucharisteo*, from which is derived the English word *Eucharist*, means "to give thanks."

It is an occasion of communion (1 Corinthians 10.16-17). The apostle Paul refers to sharing The Lord's Supper as partaking in *koinonia*, a term rendered as "communion" in the King James translation and as "fellowship" in most others.

A third biblical metaphor for the meal is *commemoration* (1 Corinthians 11.24). Celebrating Holy Communion means remembering Christ's work. In this case, memory is more than passive reflection. This is a meal of remembrance in the sense of opening the eyes; in the sense of "remember who you are."

Holy Communion proclaims the Cross with broken bread, the symbol of Christ's broken body, and the cup, the symbol of Christ's spilled blood.

We do not believe that the bread and cup become literally the flesh and blood of the Lord. Rather, the bread and cup are symbols of these, yet God is active in them; this is a mystery. As a child once put it, "I know that the