

WORSHIP AT CROSSROADS PRESBYTERIAN FELLOWSHIP

1. Core principles

God's relationships

The one true God is a personal God. God's very nature is a Trinity of three persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) who have lived in loving relation with one another from all eternity. This personal God has become human in the person of Jesus Christ in order to draw near to us and to create a way for us to participate in the very relationships that constitute the life of God himself.

This is the ultimate purpose of worship. In every act of worship, God draws us near to him to fill us with his life and power so that we can know him and accomplish his mission for us in the world. The various actions in our worship services such as reading the Bible, praying, receiving communion, etc. are not merely human activities; rather, they are the concrete means by which God acts to sustain and strengthen his relationship with us and by which we respond to him with honor, love, and renewed commitment. Thus, worship is not merely an act of education, evangelism, or emotional comfort and release (although it includes all of those things and more); rather, worship is an act of communion with God for the life and blessing of the world.

Biblical content

In the past, God has spoken through the Bible to reveal himself and to teach his people how to worship him, and God continues to speak directly to us through the Bible so that we also can know him today. Therefore, our worship at Crossroads consists of the activities that God commands and promises through the Bible to use as his means to meet us and change us: readings and sermons that proclaim, teach, and apply God's word; prayers spoken and sung to confess our sin, to give praise/thanks to God, to intercede for the church and the world; offerings of our gifts; creeds that confess our faith/trust in God; the Lord's Supper; God's blessing.

Our worship also employs the ideas, themes, and even the very words of the Bible to accomplish all of these actions. In worship, God speaks to us as we read the Bible and preach the Bible, and we respond to God as we listen to the Bible, pray the Bible in speech and song, bless one another with the words of the Bible, confess our loyalty and trust with the words and teachings of the Bible, and enact the Bible in the Lord's Supper.

Gospel shape

The content and sequence of worship services at Crossroads follows the biblical pattern by which God establishes and renews his relationship with his people in worship. This order is the gospel in action. It is the pattern by which God graciously restores and re-makes his relationship with us.

Historic wisdom

While our primary authority is the Bible's teaching about worship, nevertheless we find that historic Christian patterns of worship provide valuable models that embody the teachings of the Bible in a way that continues to provide wise guidance for the church today. We are united to hundreds of generations of faithful men and women who passed on the faith to us and on whose shoulders we now stand. Since we are all members of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church that shares one Lord and one faith throughout the history of the church, it is fitting that we honor our fathers and mothers in the faith by expressing our unity with them in worship in tangible ways as much as possible. As a

church in the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition, we especially value many ideals drawn from its teachings on worship.

Contemporary embodiment

The historic and global Christian church is always local in culture and expression. Every individual Christian congregation is called by Christ and gifted with his presence and power to fulfill his redemptive mission in a particular place and cultural moment. Therefore, our expressions of Christian worship at Crossroads seek to reflect continuity with the universal church in the idiom of the specific time, place, and cultures in which we live.

Missional implications

Faithful worship always overflows in faithful living. God meets us in worship to reorient our whole lives and to equip us to join him in his mission to redeem and glorify the whole world. It is not an escape from the “real” world of everyday life. Rather, it is a time to clear away confusion and illusion, to put daily life back into the clear and true perspective of the gospel of Christ, and to engage in the practices that form us in the life of God’s kingdom. Sunday worship at Crossroads always keeps life in the world Monday through Saturday firmly in view.

2. From Principles to Practice

How are these broad principles fleshed out in our actual practices of worship?

Order that embodies the whole gospel in a holistic way

The order or framework for our worship services follows a pervasive gospel-shaped worship pattern in the Bible. The ancient Christian churches adopted and adapted this pattern, and it has become the most enduring and universal template for Christian worship. This biblical and historic worship framework ensures that we receive the fullness of God’s gifts to us and that we respond appropriately with the fullness of our lives.

- God has the first and last word in worship as he both calls us into worship and sends us forth on his mission with his blessing.
- We enter into worship with both praise/thanks and confession of sin.
- We receive and celebrate both the ministry of God’s word and God’s table (the Lord’s Supper) every week.
- We respond to God’s word in many ways, including creeds, prayers, and offerings.

(See the article “What Happens in Worship” for a very brief explanation of our order of worship.)

Preaching and applying the whole Bible

Following the best ideals of the early church and later Presbyterian tradition, sermons at Crossroads focus on both biblical content and missional application. Our pastors teach the meaning of biblical texts in depth and use concrete illustrations and examples to draw out the implications of these texts for life in the modern world. Usually, our pastors preach sequentially through whole books of the Bible (or at least large portions thereof), alternating between Old and New Testaments.

Active participation with the whole church

According to the Bible, the whole church is a priesthood with both the high privilege and calling to know and serve God in worship in a variety of very active ways. Therefore, we provide ways for the

whole congregation to participate actively in every part of the service. Each week the service includes these biblical actions:

- Speaking responses together to respond to God's word to us.
- Singing songs together to offer praise, thanks, lament, and requests to God.
- Professing our common faith together with a creed.
- Praying together using psalms, the Lord's Prayer, or other biblical texts.
- Standing and raising hands together.
- Sitting and serving one another as we partake in the Lord's Supper.

Most often we follow the biblical and historically Christian practice of speaking with one voice and moving as one body in our responses. In doing so, we are united to hundreds of generations of Christian from the past and millions of Christians around the world who all share a common worship language in creeds, prayers, and responses.

Music old and new from the whole church

Music is one of the most glorious ways that we worship in one voice. Worship songs are our prayers of response to God; therefore, the content and style of the music vary to evoke and express a wide range of emotions and messages appropriate to all the different ways God serves us. In order to balance historic traditions with contemporary applications, we sing increasingly diverse kinds of music: old hymns and new hymns, old hymns with new tunes and new hymns with old tunes, and more contemporary worship songs from more recent generations. We also plan to sing songs from more culturally diverse settings, such as black gospel, African, Asian, and Latino songs. As God continues to provide our church with talented musicians, we try to follow biblical examples by using all categories of musical instruments to accompany congregational singing (e.g., Psalm 150), which currently includes piano/keyboard, guitars, bass, percussion (sometimes just an African djembe and snare drum; sometimes a full drum set), flute, and sometimes violin and cello.

Church calendar to celebrate the whole biblical story

The early church adapted the biblical calendar from ancient Israel and established an annual Christian calendar of special festivals focused on the life, death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Jesus Christ as well as his sending the Holy Spirit to empower us with his presence. At Crossroads, we celebrate the major festivals of this historic Christian year with songs and other prayers, Bible readings, sermons, and visual art that address the unique themes of the seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost. Practically, this calendar maintains a proper breadth and depth to our worship as we progress each year through a celebration of the whole person and work of Jesus Christ as the center of all of creation, all of history, and all of our own personal lives.

Visual art that speaks to the whole person

Worship at Crossroads embodies the good news of Jesus Christ not only in words and music but also in visual symbols. The central means by which God meets us and serves us in worship are found at the center of our worship space. Standing side-by-side in that central position are the communion table bearing bread and wine for the Lord's Supper and a pulpit symbolizing the importance of God's word. Colorful banners change with each new season of the church calendar and tell the story of Jesus with both ancient Christian symbols and (at our site in Maplewood) more modern creative renderings by a local artist. Our senior pastor also wears a robe at our Maplewood site as a symbol that it is Jesus who leads us in worship through the leaders he has called and equipped to represent him to serve his church.