

# Order of Worship and Worship Philosophy Policy

**Adopting Body:** Board of Elders / Consistory–Session

**Applies To:** Heritage Covenant Church and any church plant or ministry work that adopts this policy

**Policy Type:** Worship Governance and Philosophy Policy

**Primary Purpose:** To establish a biblically grounded, confessionally faithful, and pastorally wise framework for the gathered worship of Heritage Covenant Church through the ordinary means of grace.

## 1. Purpose of Corporate Worship

The gathered worship of the church is central to the life of the Christian community. Scripture teaches that when the church gathers, God Himself meets with His covenant people. Corporate worship is therefore not merely a program, a teaching event, or a musical experience. It is a sacred encounter in which God calls His people into His presence, ministers to them through His Word and Spirit, and sends them back into the world to live for His glory.

Worship is the ascription of worth, honor, and praise to the triune God, as His people respond to His self-revelation in reverence, gratitude, repentance, and joyful surrender. It includes adoration, confession of sin, receiving the promises of the gospel, offering thanksgiving, and yielding our lives afresh to God's will. Worship strengthens and is strengthened by the communion of saints, and it rehearses the mighty redemptive acts of God in creation, redemption, and restoration.

Because worship is so central to the life of the church, Heritage Covenant Church seeks to order its worship according to the patterns and principles revealed in Scripture. The goal of this policy is not merely to establish an order of service, but to preserve and promote a deeply biblical, confessionally Reformed, and pastorally wise approach to the gathered worship of God's people.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that worship at Heritage Covenant Church remains:

- biblically grounded
- centered on the ordinary means of grace
- historically rooted in the Christian and Reformed tradition
- clear and understandable for both believers and visitors
- spiritually formative for the whole congregation
- reverent, joyful, participatory, and God-centered

Corporate worship is one of the chief ways Christ shepherds His people. In gathered worship, God calls His people out of the world and into covenant communion with Himself. He speaks, assures, feeds, corrects, strengthens, and sends them. For that reason, worship must never be treated as secondary, optional, or merely expressive. It is one of the primary places where God forms His church.

## **2. The Biblical Theology of Worship**

Throughout Scripture, worship follows a recognizable covenantal pattern in which God initiates communion with His people and His people respond to Him in faith. Worship begins with God, not with us. He reveals Himself, calls His people, receives their praise, exposes their sin, grants forgiveness, speaks His Word, and sends them with His blessing.

This broad covenantal pattern may be summarized in the following way:

- God calls His people to Himself
- God reveals His holiness and exposes sin
- God provides grace and forgiveness
- God speaks His Word to His people
- God sends His people into the world with His blessing

This pattern appears repeatedly throughout redemptive history. At Mount Sinai, God gathers His people before Him, reveals His holiness, establishes covenantal communion, and blesses them (Exodus 19–24). In the temple, the people approach God according to His appointed way, with sacrifice, priestly mediation, prayer, and blessing. In the synagogue, Scripture is read and explained. In the New Testament church, believers devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, the breaking

of bread, and the prayers (Acts 2:42). Lord's Day worship continues this covenantal pattern in light of the finished work of Christ.

Because of this biblical pattern, Heritage Covenant Church believes that gathered worship should reflect the gospel itself. The gospel is not merely something preached within the service; it is the shape of the service. In worship, God gathers sinners into His presence through Christ, grants grace to the needy, addresses His people through His Word, and sends them into the world as witnesses.

In worship, the church also remembers and proclaims the mighty redemptive acts of God. The church does not gather each week to create a spiritual experience, but to be reoriented again and again to the reality of who God is, what He has done in Christ, who we are in Him, and how we are called to live. Corporate worship is therefore covenantal, doxological, formative, and missional.

### **3. The Regulative Principle of Worship**

Heritage Covenant Church seeks to worship God according to the Regulative Principle of Worship. This principle teaches that the church should worship God only in the ways that He has commanded in Holy Scripture. While there may be freedom in circumstances, forms, and arrangements that wisely serve the church in a particular context, the elements of worship themselves must be grounded in the Word of God.

This means that worship is not governed by novelty, consumer preference, entertainment value, or mere tradition for tradition's sake. Rather, worship is governed by the question: What has God appointed for His church when she gathers before Him?

The ordinary elements of worship include:

- the reading of Scripture
- the preaching of Scripture
- prayer
- congregational singing
- the administration of the sacraments
- offerings and acts of thanksgiving

In keeping with the teaching of Scripture and the historic Reformed tradition, as summarized in the Westminster Larger Catechism (Q. 156), the public reading of Holy Scripture in the gathered assembly is to be performed by those called and ordained to that office—namely, the elders and ministers of the Word.

While all believers are encouraged to read Scripture privately and in various settings of discipleship, the public reading of Scripture in corporate worship is a ministerial act

entrusted to those who bear responsibility for the oversight, teaching, and shepherding of the church.

These are commonly referred to as the ordinary means of grace because through them Christ nourishes, corrects, strengthens, and builds His church by the Holy Spirit. The church is not at liberty to replace these means with techniques, performances, or innovations that shift the focus of worship away from God's appointed way of meeting with His people.

At the same time, Heritage Covenant Church recognizes that the Regulative Principle does not require a rigid uniformity of order in every service. The particular sequence of elements, the wording used to frame them, and the musical style accompanying congregational singing may vary, provided that the elements remain faithful to Scripture and serve the theological purpose of gathered worship.

Because God truly meets His people through visible and invisible means, all gathered worship carries a sacramental character. This does not mean that every part of the service is a sacrament in the technical sense, but that worship is more than symbolic remembrance or inward reflection. In gathered worship, God truly gives Himself to His people through the means He has appointed. He is present by His Spirit, addressing, comforting, convicting, and feeding His church in Christ.

## **4. The Gospel-Shaped and Trinitarian Rhythm of Worship**

Heritage Covenant Church structures its gathered worship around four primary movements:

**God Gathers → God Gives Grace → God Speaks → God Sends**

This framework reflects the basic shape of God's covenant dealings with His people and provides a simple, biblical, and memorable structure for the Lord's Day service. Each week, our worship follows this gospel pattern:

- God gathers His people into His presence
- God gives grace through the gospel of Christ
- God speaks through His Word
- God sends His people into the world with His blessing

This structure communicates a central biblical truth: the congregation does not create worship; we are gathered into worship by God and respond to His gracious initiative.

The service is therefore not a random collection of disconnected elements, but a unified act of covenant communion shaped by the gospel.

This fourfold pattern also provides clarity for visitors and new believers. Rather than requiring familiarity with historic liturgical terminology, it expresses the movement of worship in clear biblical language that highlights God's action and our response. At the same time, historic liturgical forms and language remain valuable and may be used within this framework, which seeks to express those enduring realities in a way that is both faithful and accessible.

## The Trinitarian Shape of Worship

Because Christian worship is communion with the triune God, this pattern is not only covenantal and gospel-shaped, but also distinctly Trinitarian.

In the economy of redemption, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work inseparably yet distinctly to bring the church into fellowship with God. This divine work is reflected in the structure of gathered worship:

- **The Father gathers His people** by His sovereign call
- **The Son gives grace** through His finished and sufficient work
- **The Holy Spirit speaks through the Word**, applying Christ to His people
- **The triune God sends His people** with His blessing and presence

This does not divide the work of God, but reflects the unified action of the triune God as revealed in Scripture. The Father calls, the Son mediates, and the Spirit applies—all working together to draw the church into communion with God and to conform His people to the image of Christ.

Thus, the fourfold pattern of worship is not merely a helpful structure, but a participation in the saving work of the triune God. In worship, we are gathered by the Father, reconciled through the Son, transformed by the Spirit, and sent in the name of the triune God.

<b>Movement</b>	<b>Trinitarian Emphasis</b>	<b>Spiritual Meaning</b>
<b>God Gathers</b>	The Father calls	God summons His people into His presence
<b>God Gives Grace</b>	The Son gives grace	Christ reveals sin and provides forgiveness
<b>God Speaks</b>	The Spirit speaks through the Word	The Spirit applies Scripture to form the church
<b>God Sends</b>	The Triune God blesses and commissions	God sends His people into the world

## 5. Truth, Emotion, and the Nature of Worship

Heritage Covenant Church affirms that human beings are created by God as whole persons—mind, heart, affections, and will. True worship therefore engages the whole person. Worship is not merely intellectual, nor is it merely emotional. It is the wholehearted response of faith to the self-revelation of God.

At the same time, Scripture teaches a right order in worship and discipleship:

**TRUTH LEADS. FAITH RECEIVES. EMOTIONS RESPOND. LIFE FOLLOWS.**

God's truth does not depend on our emotional readiness in order to be received. Rather, God addresses His people through His Word, and by His Spirit He works that truth into mind, heart, and life. This means that emotional engagement is not the gateway to worship, nor is it the test of whether worship has truly occurred.

Therefore, Heritage Covenant Church rejects the idea that worship leaders or musicians must first create an emotional state before the congregation can respond to God or become receptive to the preaching of the Word. We do not believe that emotional intensity is the measure of spiritual authenticity. We do not believe that music's role is to "prime" people for the sermon through atmosphere, emotional build, or psychological preparation.

Instead, we affirm that God's Word is living and active, and that the Spirit of God uses the means of grace to shape both thought and affection. The preaching of the gospel, the singing of biblical truth, the prayers of the church, and the sacraments themselves all serve to form the heart over time.

Emotions are good and God-given. Scripture is filled with reverence, joy, sorrow, gratitude, holy fear, lament, longing, and delight. We do not seek emotionless worship. Nor do we seek coldness, detachment, or bare intellectualism. The Psalms teach us to bring our whole selves before God. Yet emotions must be governed by truth rather than treated as autonomous or authoritative.

Thus, emotions are:

- good and God-given
- meaningful indicators of the heart
- proper responses to the truth of God

But emotions are not:

- the foundation of worship
- the measure of true worship
- the authority over truth
- a prerequisite for receiving God's Word

True worship includes not only right belief and right affection, but also confession of sin, grateful trust, and the surrender of our lives to God's will. In this way, worship forms both deep conviction and deep affection. It teaches the congregation not to follow feelings as ultimate, but to bring feelings under the truth of God and to let truth, by the Spirit, reshape affections over time.

## **6. The Role of Music in Worship**

Music is an essential and beautiful part of Christian worship, but it is not the center of worship and it does not define worship. Music serves worship. More specifically, congregational singing is one of the God-appointed elements of worship and functions as a means by which the church praises God, confesses the faith, remembers the gospel, and responds corporately to God's Word.

Congregational singing should:

- proclaim biblical truth
- lead the congregation in corporate response
- engage mind, heart, and body
- reinforce the gospel movement of the service
- deepen congregational participation, not replace it

Music in gathered worship should therefore be chosen and led with theological care. The central question is not merely whether a song is moving, familiar, modern, or traditional, but whether it is biblically faithful, congregationally singable, contextually wise, and fitting for the place it occupies in the service.

Heritage Covenant Church explicitly rejects approaches to music that treat it as a tool for generating emotional states, creating atmosphere, or manipulating response. We reject the idea that music should function as a performance, a spectacle, or an aesthetic centerpiece. We reject the notion that worship is measured by how emotionally stirred the congregation becomes during music.

Instead, we affirm that music should engage the emotions through truth, not apart from it. When rightly ordered, music helps the church respond to God with reverence, joy, repentance, gratitude, and faith. It teaches the congregation to sing the truth, not merely feel around it.

Because music is a servant of worship, it should never compete with the Word, overshadow prayer, or dominate the service. The aim is not to create a mood, but to help the church sing the faith together. In this way, music becomes one of the ordinary means by which Christ forms His people in enduring affection and steady obedience.

## **7. Clarity of Language and Accessibility**

Heritage Covenant Church desires worship that is both theologically rich and pastorally accessible. Because gathered worship includes mature believers, new Christians, children, visitors, and those unfamiliar with historic Reformed worship, the service should be framed in language that is understandable without sacrificing theological depth.

For this reason, the church describes the movement of the service using the language:

- God Gathers
- God Gives Grace
- God Speaks
- God Sends

This language reflects the biblical reality that worship is primarily God's action toward His people, to which the congregation responds in faith. It also helps people see that the service is not simply a collection of religious exercises, but a coherent gospel-shaped encounter in which God Himself is at work.

Within these four movements, the historic elements of Christian worship still remain. For example:

- under God Gathers, the service may begin with a call to worship from Scripture and songs of adoration
- under God Gives Grace, the church may confess sin, hear the assurance of pardon, and sing of Christ's redeeming work

- under God Speaks, the church listens to Scripture read and preached and responds in prayer or song
- under God Sends, the church is blessed and commissioned to live faithfully in the world

Historic terms such as call to worship, confession of sin, assurance of grace, illumination, benediction, and sacrament remain valuable and may still be used. The aim is not to discard the language of the broader church, but to frame it in a way that is biblically transparent and pastorally clear.

Our goal is that visitors are not unnecessarily confused, new believers are not alienated, and the congregation as a whole is helped to understand the theological meaning of what is taking place each Lord's Day.

## **8. Maintaining the Flow of Worship**

Heritage Covenant Church seeks to maintain a worship service that flows naturally, reverently, and coherently from one movement to the next. The goal is that the service feels like one unified act of covenant communion with God, rather than a series of disconnected program segments.

This means transitions should be thoughtful, brief, and purposeful. Explanations may be offered when needed, especially for clarity or pastoral guidance, but unnecessary commentary, excessive interruptions, or abrupt changes in tone should be avoided. The congregation should be able to move with ease from Scripture to prayer, from prayer to song, from confession to assurance, and from Word to response without distraction.

A well-ordered service does not draw attention to itself. Rather, it helps the congregation remain spiritually attentive to God. Good flow preserves a sense of reverence and coherence. It allows the theological shape of the service to be felt, not merely explained.

For this reason, worship planners and leaders should think not only about the individual elements of the service, but about how those elements connect to one another. Songs, readings, prayers, and transitions should serve the larger movement of the service rather than functioning as isolated pieces.

The goal is not rigid liturgical performance, but pastoral clarity and spiritual continuity. When the service flows well, the congregation is better able to focus not on the mechanics of the service, but on God Himself.

## **9. Philosophy of Worship Style**

Heritage Covenant Church seeks to cultivate a worship culture that is reverent, joyful, theologically rich, historically rooted, and contextually faithful. Our aim is to stand firmly within the historic worship of the Christian church while expressing that worship in forms that are understandable, participatory, and fitting within our present context.

We believe that faithfulness in worship requires both continuity and contextualization. On the one hand, we seek continuity with the historic church. On the other hand, we recognize that faithful worship need not be bound to one musical style from a prior era. We therefore seek to stand on the old paths without confusing timeless truth with temporary cultural form.

This means we intentionally seek to avoid two common distortions.

### **The First Ditch: Rigid Traditionalism**

We do not believe that faithfulness requires preserving a particular musical style from a previous century as though it were inherently more holy, more Reformed, or more pleasing to God. While we deeply value historic hymns, psalms, and liturgical wisdom, we recognize that musical styles themselves are not sacred. Cultural forms shift across generations, and the church must not absolutize one era's musical vocabulary as though it were divinely mandated.

Therefore, we do not restrict ourselves to organ-only, old-hymn-only expressions simply because they are old. We gladly honor the church's heritage, but we do not believe that faithful continuity requires stylistic stagnation. Worship should be understandable and participatory for the present congregation, and the forms used should serve that purpose.

### **The Second Ditch: Performance-Driven Worship**

At the same time, we reject contemporary worship models that prioritize performance, emotional atmosphere, production value, platform-centered leadership, or concert-like presentation. We reject approaches that blur the distinction between gathered worship and entertainment, or that encourage the congregation to become spectators rather than participants.

This includes approaches that:

- treat music as a tool to generate emotional states
- prioritize the stage over the congregation

- rely on production, mood, or musical intensity to create spiritual effect
- imitate platform-driven worship cultures that make the musicians or leaders the focal point
- measure spiritual effectiveness by emotional reaction rather than by truth, reverence, participation, and lasting fruit

Corporate worship is not a concert, and the congregation is not an audience. Musicians and leaders serve the church by helping the church sing, not by performing for it.

## **A More Faithful Path**

Instead, Heritage Covenant Church seeks a more faithful and biblically grounded path: worship that is rooted in the historic faith and expressed in forms that wisely serve the present congregation.

This means:

- we embrace the theological depth of historic hymns and psalms
- we welcome biblically faithful songs written in our own time
- we use musical forms that are accessible, singable, and reverent
- we seek simplicity, substance, and clarity over production and spectacle
- we aim for leadership that is visible enough to serve, yet modest enough not to dominate

Our aim is not to replicate the past as a museum piece, nor to mirror contemporary worship culture uncritically. Rather, we seek to carry forward the substance of historic Christian worship in forms that are pastorally wise for today.

Style is therefore a servant, not a driver. It is a contextual tool, not a theological foundation. When rightly ordered, style “disappears,” and the congregation is able to look through the form to the substance—fixing heart and mind not on the style itself, but on God.

Worship is done well when the congregation is not chiefly evaluating whether the music felt traditional enough or modern enough, but is instead drawn into heartfelt, truth-governed praise to God.

# 10. Movement One – God Gathers His People

## Purpose

Worship begins with God inviting His people into His presence. The Lord's Day service does not begin with our initiative, but with God's gracious summons. In the call to worship, God gathers His covenant people and reminds them that they come before Him not on the basis of their own worthiness, but by His covenant mercy in Christ.

This opening movement should awaken the congregation to the reality that they are meeting with the living God. It should lift the eyes of the church from the distractions of the week and direct attention upward to God's greatness, holiness, majesty, and worth.

## Typical Elements

Typical elements within this movement may include:

- a Scripture read naturally that invites the congregation into worship
- an opening declaration or call to worship
- songs of praise and adoration
- an opening prayer of invocation

These elements should help the congregation consciously enter into worship, not as isolated individuals, but as the gathered people of God.

## Song Themes

Songs in this movement should emphasize:

- the holiness of God
- the greatness and majesty of God
- the kingship of Christ
- joyful praise
- the glory and worth of the triune God

The tone should be reverent and joyful, helping the congregation begin with God rather than with self.

## Examples

Examples may include:

- Holy, Holy, Holy
- Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
- All Creatures of Our God and King
- Psalm settings such as Psalm 100

The aim in this movement is not merely to “start the service,” but to help the church recognize that God Himself is calling His people into His presence.

## **11. Movement Two — God Gives Grace**

### **Purpose**

Having been gathered before a holy God, the church is led to acknowledge sin and need. The presence of God does not flatter human pride; it exposes us. Yet in Christ, the God who exposes sin is also the God who gives grace. This movement therefore includes both confession and assurance, both repentance and gospel comfort.

This part of the service teaches the congregation that worship involves honest dealing with sin and joyful receiving of the promises of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. The church learns not to hide from God, but to come into His light and hear again the good news of His mercy.

### **Typical Elements**

Typical elements within this movement may include:

- a prayer or reading that brings the congregation into confession
- corporate confession of sin
- silent confession
- a Scripture declaring God’s forgiveness and grace in Christ
- a pastoral declaration of assurance grounded in the gospel
- a song of gratitude for redemption

Depending on the particular service, this movement may also include catechetical confession, gospel readings, or prayers of dependence.

### **Song Themes**

Songs in this movement should emphasize:

- the cross of Christ
- forgiveness of sins
- justification by faith
- mercy and grace
- gratitude for redemption
- the believer's confidence in Christ alone

This movement should help the congregation feel both the seriousness of sin and the greater sufficiency of Christ.

### **Examples**

Examples may include:

- Jesus Paid It All
- Before the Throne of God Above
- In Christ Alone
- Yet Not I but Through Christ in Me

The aim in this movement is not to produce guilt for its own sake, nor sentimentality for its own sake, but to lead the congregation through confession into gospel assurance and thankful response.

## **12. Movement Three – God Speaks**

### **Purpose**

At the center of gathered worship, God speaks to His people through the reading and preaching of Holy Scripture. Here the church is nourished, instructed, corrected, encouraged, and formed by the living voice of Christ through His Word.

This movement reflects the conviction that God's Word is central in the life of the church. The church does not gather primarily to hear human opinions, practical advice, or inspiring thoughts, but to hear what God has said and continues to say through Scripture. Preaching is therefore not an appendix to worship. It is one of the central means by which Christ shepherds His people.

### **Typical Elements**

Typical elements within this movement may include:

- a prayer for illumination
- pastoral prayer for the church, the community, and the nations
- Scripture reading
- expository preaching
- a song of response
- confession of faith or catechetical response where fitting

The precise arrangement may vary, but the central aim remains the same: God's Word must be read, explained, applied, and received in faith.

### **Song Themes**

Songs in this movement may emphasize:

- the authority and beauty of Scripture
- illumination by the Holy Spirit
- devotion to God
- consecration and obedient response
- delight in Christ and His truth

### **Examples**

Examples may include:

- Speak, O Lord
- Be Thou My Vision
- O Great God

This movement should communicate clearly that God is not silent and that His people live by every word that comes from His mouth. The response of the congregation may include faith, repentance, prayer, commitment, and renewed trust.

## **13. Movement Four – God Sends**

### **Purpose**

Having been gathered by God, assured of His grace, and nourished by His Word, the church is sent into the world with His blessing. Worship does not terminate in the sanctuary; it spills outward into daily life. The people who have met with God are now commissioned to live as His covenant people in family, vocation, neighborhood, and mission.

This final movement reminds the congregation that worship and life belong together. The Lord who gathers His people also sends them. Those who have received grace are now to walk in gratitude and faithfulness.

### **Typical Elements**

Typical elements within this movement may include:

- a song of response or sending
- a charge to live faithfully
- the pronouncement of God's blessing in the benediction

The benediction is not merely a closing wish. It is God's covenant blessing pronounced upon His people as they go.

### **Song Themes**

Songs in this movement should emphasize:

- discipleship
- obedience
- mission
- consecration
- trust in God's presence and power

## **Examples**

Examples may include:

- Take My Life and Let It Be
- O Church Arise
- Facing a Task Unfinished

The aim in this movement is that the congregation leaves with a sense not merely that the service has ended, but that they have been sent by God into the world under His blessing.

## **14. The Role of Psalms**

Scripture instructs the church to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Because the Psalms are inspired Scripture and were given as the songbook of God's people, Heritage Covenant Church seeks to regularly incorporate psalm singing into gathered worship.

The Psalms teach the church how to worship God with the whole range of faithful human response. They train the people of God in praise, lament, thanksgiving, confession, longing, trust, joy, reverence, and hope. They are deeply God-centered, richly theological, and Christ-fulfilling.

For these reasons, psalm singing is not treated as optional ornamentation or historical curiosity, but as an important part of the church's worship life. Heritage Covenant

Church seeks to recover and maintain regular use of the Psalms in a way that is singable, understandable, and integrated into the life of the congregation.

The church also recognizes that hymnody and biblically faithful spiritual songs have an important role in helping the church confess the gospel in light of the fuller revelation of Christ. Therefore, the church seeks not an artificial opposition between psalms and hymns, but a rich and thoughtful use of both, with due honor given to the Psalter as the inspired songbook of the church.

## **15. Oversight of Worship**

The elders of Heritage Covenant Church bear responsibility for guarding the doctrine and practice of worship. Because worship is central to the life of the church and because what the church does in worship teaches the church what it believes, worship must be overseen with theological seriousness and pastoral wisdom.

The elders are responsible to ensure that the church's worship remains faithful to Scripture, consistent with the church's confessional commitments, and ordered in a way that promotes reverence, clarity, participation, and spiritual formation.

The pastor or pastors ordinarily bear primary responsibility for planning the weekly order of worship, selecting or approving readings, prayers, themes, and coordinating the overall theological flow of the service. Worship leaders, musicians, readers, and other servants participate in worship leadership under the oversight of the elders and in coordination with the pastor.

Those who serve musically or liturgically should understand that their role is ministerial, not performative. They are not there to draw attention to themselves, but to help the congregation worship God. For this reason, all those involved in leading worship should seek humility, theological understanding, spiritual maturity, and a servant-hearted posture.

Changes in the philosophy, structure, or governing principles of worship should be made only under elder oversight and in harmony with the doctrinal commitments of the church.

## **16. Final Principle**

The purpose of worship is not merely structure, style, or even emotional engagement. The purpose of worship is communion with the living God through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

When the church gathers, God meets with His covenant people, calls them into His presence, assures them of His grace, speaks to them through His Word, nourishes them through His appointed means, and sends them into the world as witnesses of the gospel. Faithful worship also serves as a witness to the world, for when God's people worship Him with reverence, truth, love, and authentic community, the reality of His presence is displayed among them.

Heritage Covenant Church therefore seeks worship that is God-centered, Word-saturated, confessionally grounded, spiritually formative, emotionally honest, and reverently joyful. Our desire is not to imitate a trend, preserve a mere style, or create an experience, but to worship God according to His Word in a way that forms a people who know Him truly, love Him deeply, and live for Him faithfully.

## **17. Questions and Answers**

### **1. What is worship?**

Worship is the ascription of worth, honor, praise, and devotion to the triune God. In corporate worship, God gathers His people, ministers to them through His appointed means, and receives their response of faith, repentance, thanksgiving, reverence, and joyful surrender.

### **2. Why does Heritage Covenant Church structure worship as “God Gathers, God Gives Grace, God Speaks, God Sends”?**

Because this reflects the covenantal and gospel-shaped pattern found throughout Scripture. It highlights that worship begins with God's initiative and helps the congregation understand the movement of the service as a coherent act of communion with Him.

### **3. Does this mean historic liturgical terms are unimportant?**

No. Terms such as call to worship, confession of sin, assurance of pardon, preaching, sacrament, and benediction remain meaningful and valuable. The fourfold pattern is meant to frame those realities clearly and accessibly, not replace them with something less theological.

### **4. Do emotions matter in worship?**

Yes. Worship should engage the whole person, including the affections. Scripture calls us to rejoice, mourn, repent, give thanks, and delight in God. But emotions are responses to truth, not the foundation of worship.

**5. Must people be emotionally engaged before they can receive the Word?**

No. We do not believe that emotional readiness is a prerequisite for hearing and receiving God's truth. Rather, God uses His Word by the Spirit to shape both thinking and feeling. Truth leads; emotions follow in proper relation.

**6. Is strong emotion the measure of true worship?**

No. A person may feel deeply and still not worship truly, and a person may struggle emotionally and yet worship sincerely by faith. The measure of true worship is not intensity of feeling, but faithful response to the God who reveals Himself in truth.

**7. Why not use music to create an emotional atmosphere before the sermon?**

Because music is meant to serve truth, not replace it or manipulate response to it. We reject the idea that the church must first create a mood in order for God's Word to work. The Word of God is itself powerful, and the Spirit uses it to form the heart.

**8. Does this mean worship should be cold or purely intellectual?**

No. We reject both emotional manipulation and cold formalism. We seek worship that is full of biblical truth and genuine affection—reverent, heartfelt, joyful, repentant, and spiritually alive.

**9. Why not sing only older hymns with traditional accompaniment?**

Because while we deeply value historic hymns and psalms, we do not believe one older musical style is the only faithful form of worship. Musical style is not sacred in itself. Faithfulness means preserving biblical substance while wisely contextualizing form.

**10. Why not follow the modern concert-style worship model?**

Because corporate worship is not a concert, and the congregation is not an audience. We reject performance-driven worship that centers the platform, production, or emotional build. Our aim is congregational participation, not spectacle.

**11. So what style are we aiming for?**

We aim for worship that is historically rooted, theologically rich, reverent, participatory, and contextually faithful. We want to stand on the old paths while expressing worship

in forms that serve people in the present without imitating entertainment-driven worship culture.

### **12. What role do the Psalms have in worship?**

A central one. The Psalms are the inspired songbook of God's people and should regularly shape the praise of the church. They help train the congregation in biblical worship across the full range of faithful human response.

### **13. Who oversees worship in the church?**

The elders oversee the doctrine and practice of worship. The pastor ordinarily plans the service, and musicians and worship leaders serve under elder oversight. Worship is not self-directed; it belongs under the shepherding care of the church.

### **14. What is the ultimate goal of our worship?**

The ultimate goal is communion with the living God and the formation of His people through the ordinary means of grace, so that the church may know Him truly, love Him deeply, and live for Him faithfully in the world.