

# Heart of Worship

## Revised Edition

Wann M. Fanwar

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## PREFACE

## INTRODUCTION

Matt Redman, a Christian songwriter, wrote a song entitled “The Heart of Worship” in which he encapsulates the idea that much of what we call worship is not worship at all. He suggests that the essence of worship is Jesus Christ.

When the music fades and all is stripped away,  
And I simply come;  
Longing just to bring something that's of worth,  
That will bless your heart.  
I'll bring you more than a song,  
For a song in itself is not what you have required;  
You search much deeper within,  
Through the way things appear,  
You're looking into my heart.

I'm coming back to the heart of worship,  
And it's all about you, all about you, Jesus.  
I'm sorry, Lord, for the thing I've made it  
When it's all about you, all about you, Jesus.

King of endless worth, no one could express,  
How much you deserve;  
Though I'm weak and poor, all I have is yours,  
Every single breath.  
I'll bring you more than a song,  
For a song in itself is not what you have required;  
You search much deeper within,  
Through the way things appear,  
You're looking into my heart.

This song provides a platform for exploring this very rich and essential aspect of Christian faith. There are many different views of worship. Many books have been written on the subject. Many churches now have either a worship committee or a worship minister. There are also people who maintain that worship just simply happens, like some sort of spiritual instinct that believers possess.

In many churches, members take great pride in their long established and much cherished traditions. In such churches, the mere mention of an alternative worship is treated with cynicism and disdain. At the opposite end of the spectrum, there are churches that operate from a framework that believes worship should always remain experimental. However, most churches are probably caught in some sort of dilemma between these two poles. Furthermore, most churches seem to struggle in a vicious cycle of worship that is completely bereft of ideas. Such churches sense

that more can be done to enrich their worship experience but do not know what to do!

What is worship? What constitutes proper worship? What is the biblical theology of worship? Is worship personal and private or public and congregational? Does a person need to go to church in order to worship God? These and many other questions like them are the concerns of this book.

The worship of the Church has been a driving force in my personal, academic, and professional life. In grappling with these issues, I have researched the subject quite carefully. I have spent long hours analysing the biblical data. I have also spent the last fifteen years as a pastor and Bible teacher experimenting with various worship ideas. Much of what is found in this book has arisen from both the scholarly research and the fieldwork that I have personally carried out. In a real sense, this book is more than just another resource. It is a personal odyssey, a journey into the Word and the life of God's people. That journey has given birth to the materials and reflections in this work.

The book comprises three sections. In the first section, I explore the biblical and historical data regarding worship. Because so much has been written concerning these areas of worship, my presentation is summarily non-exhaustive. The second part of the book tackles the contentious issue of music and worship. In this segment I trace the long voyage of God's people with reference to music and then provide some reflection on the role of music in worship. The final portion of the book is a resource section and contains original liturgies, ideas and programme scripts. All the services in this segment come with complete details about where and when the worship was carried out. These liturgies are all field-tested.

I hope that this book proves beneficial to all who are involved in worship planning. My target audience is the pastors, chaplains, worship ministers, worship committees, and worship leaders in the churches. I believe that the book can also be a blessing to all church members because worship concerns all of us. I would invite you to join me in this adventure.

## **SECTION I: WORSHIP THROUGH THE AGES**

## CHAPTER 1

### DEFINING WORSHIP

The most appropriate way to begin our journey is by attempting to define worship. This is a word that is used frequently by church going people. Yet, very few of them can actually define the word or explain the concepts behind the word. In listening to conversations around churches, I find that there is a lot of ignorance about the most cherished activity of Christian faith. People will even employ some very lofty terminology for the worship service without any understanding of what is entailed in such phrases.

Over the years I have collected as many definitions of worship as I can find. I would like to share some of the definitions that have caught my attention and comment on them briefly. At the end of the chapter I would then like to share my working definition of worship.

The first three definitions are characterised by brevity. All three are cited in A P Gibbs, *Worship: The Christian's Highest Occupation* (15-17). One author defines worship as "the overflow of a grateful heart, under a sense of divine favour." This definition zeros in on the bare essence of worship, response to God. Unfortunately it leaves us wondering whether congregational worship is even necessary.

Another author says that worship is the "outpouring of a soul at rest in the presence of God." In this definition we are confronted with the connection between worship and God's presence. However, like the first definition, worship understood in this way could remain as simply a personal experience.

A third short definition cited by Gibbs states, "Worship is the occupation of the heart, not with itself, not with its needs, or even with its blessings, but with God himself." I cannot help but wonder whether this definition makes too much work out of worship.

With these basic concepts behind us, we can now proceed to more substantial reflections on worship. As suggestive in the title of his book, Gibbs proposes that worship is something that is done or presented by us to God. He suggests that this is the ultimate duty of Christian faith. He states, "Worship is something presented by us to God as a willing acknowledgement of our deep appreciation of what He is and all He has done" (29). For Gibbs worship is activity centred but driven by our love for God. It is an activity that expresses our gratitude for God's activity in our behalf. In a manner of speaking worship is reciprocal action. As impressive as this definition is, it may not be sufficient to view worship as "God does something for us and so we must do something for him."

Some people prefer a less works oriented view of worship and tend to see worship as being more of an attitude of life. Siegfried Horn defines worship along such lines. He says that worship is the "attitude of humility, reverence, honor, devotion, and adoration that properly marks the relationship of created beings to their creator, especially in his presence" (*SDABD*, 1184). The strength of this



definition is its relational approach and its recognition of the creation framework of worship. Yet, by not spelling out any activity, the definition is incomplete.

Another proposal is made by R P Martin, who says that, "Worship, then, is the dramatic celebration of God in His supreme worth in such a manner that His 'worthiness' becomes the norm and inspiration of human living" ("Worship," *ISBE*, 4:1118). This definition has much to commend it. God is the centre of worship and worship is integral to life. Martin's proposal encapsulates both ideas of attitude and activity as aspects of worship.

Bob Fitts, a Christian songwriter, also believes that worship and life are interconnected. He states:

Worship is really much more than songwriting, singing, and music. People really need to see it as a way of life. We have to take worship out of the mould that we have seen it in. Too often we see it as a service, where people come together and they sing to Jesus. Worship is really a relationship with God. It is how you live your life. It's whether you obey him.

According to this approach, worship is both relational and integral to life. Worship is not simply an activity we do in church.

These are very good definitions. Nevertheless, I realise that for many people, worship is still very much a church activity. Because of this I think it is useful to consider the corporate side of worship. In *The Dynamics of Corporate Worship*, Vernon Whaley puts his finger on this corporate worship pulse and comes up with this definition:

Thus is the dynamic of corporate worship—people of diverse and broad cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and personal preferences declaring genuine love and devotion to God, together! . . . it emerges out of a genuine hunger to know and express love for God together—in one mind, in one accord. Such worship begins in the hearts of many individuals and is expressed to God collectively. The optimal word is *together*. (15)

When viewed in this way, worship is seen as existing along a spectrum. It originates in a personal experience with God but reaches a crescendo of expression in the experience of the congregation.

My favourite definition though is one provided by Eugene Peterson in *Leap Over a Wall* (cited in Philip Yancey, *The Bible Jesus Read*, 127):

Worship is the strategy by which we interrupt our preoccupation with ourselves and attend to the presence of God. Worship is the time and place that we assign for deliberate attentiveness to God—not because

he's confined to time and place but because our self-importance is so insidiously relentless that if we don't deliberately interrupt ourselves regularly, we have no chance of attending to him at all at other times and in other places.

I find Peterson's definition the most complete because it focuses on the most crucial aspect of worship: intentionality. Contrary to many popular opinions, worship may not be natural with us and it does not just happen. Worship requires thought, planning, and the forming of a habit.

Having examined all these different views, I would like to make my own proposal. I prefer to call this a working definition for two reasons. First, I believe that all good ideas must continue to evolve and should not become etched in stone. Second, worship is a dynamic experience and as such any attempt to define it must remain tentative.

Worship is what occurs whenever God's people come, individually or collectively, into his presence in response to his self-revelation, salvific acts, and calling.

I see three essentials in worship: (1) an intentional and habitual activity; (2) an experience that spans the entire personal-corporate spectrum in the experience of the church; and (3) a response to God. Worship proceeds from God and touches the human heart in such a way that it compels a specific response that is then directed towards God, the very source of that action.

With this conceptual paradigm as our starting point, we can now turn our attention to the biblical data. Worship played a major role in the life of Israel and of the Church and it is to the experiences of these two entities that we must now direct our thoughts and reflections. Both the Old and New Testaments have much to contribute to this study and it is only in fully understanding the entire biblical data that we can honestly speak about worship as being biblical.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **WORSHIP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT**

The Old Testament (OT) is a particularly rich source of worship material. Not only do we find a worship manual (Leviticus) and a worship songbook (the Psalms), we also find numerous accounts and stories of worship. The impression created by the OT is that worship was not simply a part of Israel's religion, it was central to its existence.

#### **THE SACRIFICIAL SYSTEM**

The most tangible and distinctive part of the OT worship scene was the sacrificial system or the cult of Israel as it is sometimes called. It was within the sacrificial system that the very plan of salvation was pre-figured. To understand OT worship, some comprehension of the sacrificial system is necessary.

There were five principal sacrifices prescribed in Leviticus (chs 1-7): the burnt offering, the sin offering, the reparation offering (also referred to as the guilt or trespass offering), the grain offering, and the fellowship or peace offering. The burnt offering served a dual purpose, it could be offered in conjunction with sin or simply as a worship sacrifice. The sin and reparation offerings were given strictly in conjunction with sin while the grain and fellowship offerings were worship offerings. The detailed manner of the instructions concerning these sacrifices underlines the importance of this particular aspect of OT worship.

#### *Type of Worship*

The sacrificial system represented a 'one-to-one' type of worship. Apart from the sacrifices that were offered on behalf of the nation, the sacrifices were largely a personal experience, strictly between God and worshipper. There was, however, the presence of a human intermediary—the priest. Even though this was a personal kind of worship it was never private as it was carried out in the Sanctuary in full view of the other celebrants. The offering of the morning and evening burnt offering (called the 'Daily') was a congregational affair.

#### *Emphasis of Worship*

The main emphasis of this type of worship was the sacrifice—that which is brought to God by the worshipper. The sacrifices of the OT underscored certain conceptual elements.

#### **No Empty Hands**

Israel was commanded never to come into the presence of God with empty hands (Exod 34:20). They must always bring a sacrifice (an offering) in order for their worship to be acceptable. This idea of sacrifice is also stressed in the New

Testament (see Heb 13:15-16; Rom 12:1). The offer of a sacrifice was an essential part of OT worship.

### **Perfect Sacrifice**

A sacrifice brought to God must be unblemished (Lev 1:3; etc.). An animal sacrifice could not have any disease, broken bone, or torn skin. It had to be free of physical defects. An animal sacrifice was always a clean, domesticated animal and was invariably the most valuable, the costliest, and the most affordable. The sacrifice was perfect because it was the best one could give.

### **Proportionate Giving**

The gifts given to God depended upon a person's resources or upon the donor's ability. No exorbitant demands were made. The worshipper was expected to give as he has been given (see Lev 1-7). More was expected from a priest or a community leader than was expected from an ordinary Israelite. This was especially evident in the prescriptions for the sin offering.

### **Varying Purposes**

Not all the sacrifices served the same purpose. There were different reasons for bringing a sacrifice. Offerings could be brought for sins, atonement, vows, thankfulness, purification, public praise, and gaining divine favour. Certain offerings served a dual purpose while others served one specific purpose. This type of worship was rather multifaceted.

### **Worshipper's Participation**

The worshipper was actively involved in the offering of sacrifices. He was not a spectator. After presenting the sacrifice to the attending priest, the worshipper laid hands on the animal and either confessed his sins or explained the reason for the offering. He then had to slaughter the animal, skin it, chop it into pieces, and wash the parts in the basin. Perhaps a psalm was recited or sung (either by the worshipper or the Levites) while this was going on. This seems to have been especially the case with the burnt offering (see Pss 20:1-5; 40:6-7; 50:7-15; 51:15-19; 66:13-15).

### **Effects of Sacrifice**

The sacrifices had a twofold effect—God-ward and man-ward. To God, the sacrifices were a "pleasing aroma" (Lev 1:9, 13, 17, etc.; see also Eph 5:2; Rom 12:1; 2 Cor 2:15). For the worshipper, the sacrifices "made atonement" and "brought forgiveness" (Lev 1:4; 4:20, 26; etc.).

### **Rituals**

Every sacrifice was accompanied by specific ritual (manner of offering). There were certain common features such as the laying of hands and slaughtering of animals.

Yet the form varied considerably. Some sacrifices were completely consumed by fire while others were only partially consumed. Some sacrifices became food for the attending priests and their families.

## **THE RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS**

An equally prominent feature of Israel's life were the great festivals. These great feasts served to complement the sacrificial system. Whereas the sacrifices were largely a personal form of worship, the festivals were a national experience. As such they were an integral part of the OT worship scene. Without these festivals, OT data would seem rather biased towards personal worship. The festivals provided a framework for congregational worship

### *Types of Festivals*

There were three types of festivals that Israel celebrated (see Lev 23-25). One type was the weekly festival, the *Shabbat*. This was the most regular of the festivals but its treatment is rather succinct. There are only a few sketchy details about *Shabbat* with the command to "gather together for sacred assembly" as its most significant feature. At the very least *Shabbat* was a congregational type of worship.

A second type of festival was the annual feasts. There were seven in all—the Passover (Peshach), Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks (Pentecost), Trumpets, Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and Tabernacles (Sukkoth). The first four were spring festivals while the remaining three were celebrated in the autumn. During the time of Queen Esther, in Persia, the Jews added the feast of Purim (see Esther) while during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC Maccabean revolt Hanukah was incorporated into Jewish worship.

A third kind of festival was the special or occasional festival. These included the Sabbath of Years, celebrated once every seven years, and Jubilee, celebrated once every fifty years.

### *Type of Worship*

Israel's festivals provided a rather large (national) context for worship. They demonstrated that worship not only exists on a personal level but also on a national level. OT worship ranged from the very personal sacrifice, to the congregational *Shabbat*, to the national festivals.

### *Emphasis of Worship*

There were two main emphases in the religious festivals of Israel. First, there was the focus on the idea of *Shabbat*. The primary purpose of the weekly *Shabbat* was for sacred assembly (literally "assembly of holiness" Lev 23:3). This implied that the *Shabbat* was, principally, a day of worship. It was differentiated from other days of the week in precisely this manner. It was treated differently and mundane and regular activities were not to be engaged in. Corporate worship was

the most appropriate activity of *Shabbat*. The same concept was also applied to the high days that marked the festivals. Such days were also called *Shabbat* and the law required that they be treated exactly like the weekly *Shabbat*.

Second, the festivals emphasised the idea of celebration. This corporate worship of Israel was largely, and almost always, a celebration. The festivals celebrated some important historical or contemporary experience of faith. The major elements of the celebration were:

- Offerings. Every festival was commemorated with many sacrifices.
- Song and Praise. An entire section of the Psalms was devoted to these festivals. Pss 120-134 are sometimes known as the Pilgrim Psalms and may have been the psalms that the pilgrims sang on their visits to Jerusalem. In addition, there were three clans of Levites whose principal duty was to provide music, especially during these festivities.
- Spirituality. The celebrations were at the root of Israel's religious and national psyche and were central to its spirituality. (see Ps 137). Their absence was often viewed with a sense of loss (see 2 Chron 30 & 35).
- Corporate Joy. The festivals were always a shared and joyful experience. They were never a private experience. The nation's joy was the issue in such festivities. Ps 122:1 encapsulates this sentiment when the psalmist sings, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord'."

## **SPECIAL SERVICES**

To obtain a more fully orbed understanding of OT worship, it is also necessary to consider certain special worship services. These services provide additional foci to the worship experience.

### *The Special Services*

In the OT we read about three outstanding worship services that stood outside the regular pattern of worship. These special services were a one-time experience and each service was precipitated by a rather unique occasion. The three services were the dedication of Solomon's temple, Hezekiah's temple rededication and Passover, and Josiah's Passover.

#### **The Dedication of Solomon's Temple (2 Chron 5-7)**

Upon the completion of the temple construction, the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem to be placed in the Temple. The congregation that gathered was made up of the king, his courtiers, all the elders of Israel, all the tribal chieftains, all clan leaders, all priests and Levites, and the populace of Jerusalem. The service began with the offering of an uncountable number of sacrifices. This was followed by a mass musical performance by a 288-voice choir-cum-orchestra and 120 trumpet section made up of priests. As the worship proceeded, the temple was enveloped in a cloud. Solomon then pronounced a benediction on the

people and offered a prayer of dedication. Fire and “God’s glory” descended on the temple while the congregation prostrated itself before God. More sacrifices (120,000 sheep and goats and 22,000 cattle) were offered. All in all, the celebrations lasted for 14 days.

### **Hezekiah’s Temple Rededication and Passover (2 Chron 29-31)**

This worship was preceded by seven days of reconstruction work. Special sacrifices (7 bulls, 7 rams, 7 male lambs, 7 male goats) were offered. The choir, orchestra, and trumpeters performed while the congregation bowed in worship. An appeal for offerings was made resulting in 70 bulls, 100 rams, and 200 male lambs being given for the burnt offering. A further 600 bulls and 3000 sheep and goats were given as offerings. The Passover was then celebrated. Since it fell on the wrong month and the people did not have sufficient time to prepare themselves ritually, Hezekiah prayed for special dispensation from God. After the Passover a 14-day celebration of the Unleavened Bread (twice the prescribed duration) ensued. This prolonged celebration was the choice of the people. The festivities were followed by religious reforms including a four months drive to collect all unpaid tithe and contributions to the temple.

### **Josiah’s Passover (2 Chron 34-35)**

This Passover, unlike Hezekiah’s, was preceded by religious reforms. The service began with Josiah’s charge to the priests and Levites. The king provided 30,000 sheep and goats and 3000 cattle for the Passover meal. His officials contributed 2600 sheep and goats and 300 cattle while the Levites contribute 5000 sheep and goats and 500 cattle. The priests and Levites prepared the meal in the temple precinct. They roasted and cooked the meat in large cauldrons and then served the meal to the congregation. The musicians performed throughout the day.

#### *Type of Worship*

A close examination of these special worship services shows that they were of the national variety. Sacrifices were performed but even the sacrifices were not for individuals but for the nation. The services fit better the mould of the festivals but were carried out on an even larger scale.

#### *Emphasis of Worship*

In keeping with the festival spirit that pervaded these services, celebration was a major point of emphasis. Celebration was a chief element of the worship, especially because each service was unique and served to gel the nation together in some special way.

A new element of worship, reformation, emerged with these services. As observed in the experiences of Hezekiah and Josiah, reformation can generate or be generated by true worship.

Another focal point of these services was prayer. This type of worship displayed a definite bias towards prayer as evidenced by the long prayers recorded in each narrative. Prayer became a major component of worship.

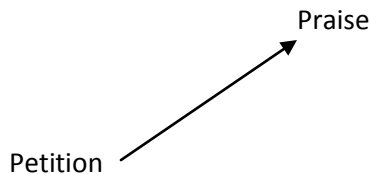
### THE PSALTER

The uniqueness of the OT is that it contains a book whose principal claim to canonicity is its worship material. In fact, the Psalter is the Bible's principal collection of songs of praise and it provided OT worship its ethos. The book is not only the longest in the biblical canon, it is also placed at the very heart of the Bible.

The psalms exhibit a dual polarity of *petition* and *praise*. There is a continuum that moves the worshipper from the former to the latter. In worship, we journey between supplication and praise. Praise is the heart of the matter and worship consists of either a plea for help or praise for God's glory. Petition and praise then become the primal forms of speech and faith.

In the five collections (1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, 107-150) that comprise the Psalter, petition dominates the first two while praise is dominant in the last two. The middle collection is equally poised between the two. There is a noticeable movement from the petition phase of the early chapters to the purely praise mode of the later chapters (see Diagram 1). The same movement can be observed in the Pilgrim Psalms with Ps 120 starting out with petition while Ps 134 ends with a call to praise.

Diagram 1. Bipolar Structure of the Psalter.



Ps 107 serves as a microcosm of the Psalter's pattern. In the four main stanzas of this psalm, worship moves from petition via deliverance to praise. This is illustrated in Diagram 2.

Diagram 2. Structure of Ps 107.

	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Praise	8-9	15-16	21-22	31-32
Deliverance	6-7	13-14	19-20	28-30
Petition	4-6	10-13	17-19	23-28



There is an upward movement from reflection on the human situation to adoration of God. This structure of praise provides us with a view of the dynamism of worship itself. To press home this point, the first four collections of the Psalter conclude with a doxology (41:13; 72:18-19; 89:52; 106:48) and the entire book crescendos until it reaches the unadulterated praise of Ps 150. This is the heart of worship when God's people can move away from their situation into his presence.

### **PRINCIPLES OF WORSHIP IN THE OT**

There is little doubt that the worship experience of the OT cannot be replicated in our time. Nevertheless, the wealth of information that the OT provides compels us to examine the principles that emerge. While the experience of Israel cannot be duplicated, the principles that are embedded in its worship must be taken into account. I see certain principles that we can learn from the OT concerning worship.

- Worship is the activity of a holy assembly. Worship is the coming together of God's people into his presence. This is not an optional exercise for God's people. Without the "assembly of holiness" worship is never complete.
- Worship is the offering of sacrifices. The giving of offerings is a very appropriate act of worship. Worship, should be accompanied always by hands filled with grateful expressions. We cannot worship with empty hands.
- Worship is most complete in a congregation. While personal worship of God is essential to the believer's life, it is in the gathering of the congregation that worship attains its highest and most complete form.
- Worship is celebration. This is so because celebration is a shared experience. Celebration is the collective experience of a body of believers and therefore is a vital part of worship. True worship is joy-centred and it finds ways for expressing such joy.
- Worship is dynamic. OT worship was marked by considerable variety both in the sacrifices and the festivals. There was no single correct form but only correct hearts. Even the festivals were celebrated differently at different times. Worship is not a static experience but rather a dynamic, alive experience.
- Worship is the activity of holy persons. This principle is the corollary of the first principle. The participation of each worshipper plays an important role in the worship of the OT. Worshippers are participants not spectators. Congregational participation is a vital ingredient in worship.
- Worship is prayer oriented. Prayer is always a close companion of good worship. This is especially true in congregational situations. This is clearly demonstrated in several of the worship narratives.
- Worship is reformation. OT data shows that worship and reformation are travel companions and where one goes so does the other. Whenever God's people truly worship, changes will come into their lives and things will happen. Worship and reformation go hand in hand.

- Worship is also instructional. In 2 Chron 20, Jehoshaphat addresses the people and commanded his courtiers to do the same. In the Psalms there is great interest in the 'word'. The prophets certainly carried out a preaching role while the priests performed religious instruction.

The OT has much to teach us about biblical worship and its information is invaluable. However, it is not the only resource available to Christians today. Another valuable resource is the New Testament (NT) and the following chapter directs attention to this second resource of biblical worship.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

The synagogue served as the single most important model for the NT Church as it sought to build its worship. The synagogue provided a historical framework for the worship of the NT Church and the primary format of that worship. The earliest Christians were all Jews and initially did not see their movement as a breakaway sect. In an attempt to demonstrate that Jesus was the true Messiah, they maintained their connection to Judaism, especially to its worship services.

In Acts there are numerous references to the apostles worshipping in the temple and the synagogues. It was only natural for these early Christians to replicate the worship of the synagogue because this was deemed the most appropriate approach to their own people. To understand the worship of the NT Church we must consider its Judaic roots.

#### **WORSHIP IN THE SYNAGOGUE**

During the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, Jewish worship occurred in two different locations, the temple and the synagogues. Temple worship was more or less restricted to the great feasts of Israel. Sacrifices were still offered at the temple but these had become secondary to Judaism. From the time of the exile onward, Judaism had become increasingly dependent on the synagogues for their primary diet of worship.

Following a rabbinic dictum that a synagogue should be built wherever ten adult Jewish men lived, synagogues sprouted all over the Roman Empire. Every Jewish community had its own synagogue and it is these worship places that became the backbone of the Jewish faith. Their impact upon a fledgling Christian community cannot be underestimated.

#### *Type of Worship*

The worship of the synagogue was principally congregational worship. While the synagogues themselves served a multipurpose function, their primary role was worship, particularly Sabbath worship.

#### *Emphasis of Worship*

The worship of the synagogue had two distinct emphases. The first was the Scriptures. The Scriptures played a truly dominant role in synagogue worship as will be demonstrated in the synagogue order of worship. The Scriptures were recited, they were read, and they were central to the worship service.

Another important element of synagogue worship was prayer. Along with the Scriptures, prayer played an important part in the worship service. The '*Amidah*, or standing prayer, was an integral part of the worship service. A careful examination of synagogue worship reveals that it was comprised entirely of these two

elements. The absence of music and congregational singing in the synagogue presented a stark contrast to OT worship.

### *Order of Worship*

Again, in sharp contrast to OT worship, the synagogue offered a worship that was clearly liturgical. There was a rather fixed form of worship that appeared to have been fairly universal. The following is the best reconstruction of synagogue worship in the 1<sup>st</sup> century that has been pieced together.

#### **Shema**

*Shema'* is a recitation of Deut 6:4-9 (which begins with the Hebrew word *shema'*), which functioned as a virtual creed in Judaism. The *shema'* was recited in unison by the congregation. On Sabbath, the recitation was accompanied by sevenfold prayers, before and after the recitation. If a priest was present, he would pronounce an Aaronic blessing.

#### **Parashah**

This was the reading of appointed portions of the Torah (the Law of Moses). This reading was considered the most sacred part of the service. The reading followed a three-year cycle with the Sabbath portion divided into seven parts of three verses each. The various sections were read by different members of the congregation. Prior to the reading, the Torah scroll was carefully removed from a special ark in which it was stored. It was opened behind a curtain and then brought outside for the reading. The reader was required to stand up during the reading.

#### **Haphtarah**

This consisted of readings from the prophets and was considered less sacred than the Parashah. The passage was often chosen by the reader himself, as evidenced in Luke 4 where Jesus selected Isa 61 for his reading. Whereas readers for the Parashah were appointed, readers for the Haphtarah could be requested on the spot. While the reading of the prophets was not mandatory, it occurred fairly frequently.

#### **Darashah**

The Hebrew word literally means "study." This segment of the worship was the equivalent of a sermon and was given by a member of the congregation. It was delivered seated and the 'preacher' sat in an elevated seat called the 'seat of Moses'. Visitors were often asked to deliver the sermon (e.g., Jesus and Paul) and the sermon was usually a commentary on the Haphtarah reading. It should be noted that no 'darashah' accompanied the reading of the Torah, which was deemed too sacred for human commentary.

## **Benediction**

The service normally ended with the pronouncement of a benediction. If a priest was present, he would pronounce the benediction. Otherwise, the ruler of the synagogue or the preacher would fulfil this function.

One distinctive feature of the synagogue was the absence of professional clergy. While a person was appointed to oversee the affairs of the synagogue, he was not clergy as understood in Christian terms. The absence of professional clergy ensured wider participation from the members of the congregation.

Another prominent feature of the synagogue was that women were not allowed to participate in the service. All participants were men while women and children were mere spectators. In the NT we can detect some of this all male attitude as evidenced in the rhetoric of some Pauline epistles.

## **WORSHIP IN THE NT CHURCH**

By and large, the worship of the NT Church appears to have been an adaptation and modification of synagogue worship. The Church maintained the dual focus on the Scriptures and prayer but reinserted music and congregational singing into the worship service. The presence of so many songs in the NT is testimony to this fact.

### *Type of Worship*

Like synagogue worship, the worship of the NT Church was largely congregational. This congregational gathering was viewed as the most appropriate activity of the body of faith (Heb 10:25). What was distinctive about the Church was the fact that such gatherings were not limited to the Sabbath day. In the formative years of the Church's existence, the believers felt compelled to come together as frequently as they could. The small size of the Church and the increasing rejection by mainstream religion precipitated such a desire for togetherness. Acts 2:42-47 implies that this congregational gathering was almost a daily affair. Herein lies a different attitude towards worship displayed by the NT Church.

### *Emphasis of Worship*

The close resemblance of the worship of the NT Church to synagogue worship meant that the emphasis on Scriptures and prayer was maintained. However, unlike synagogue worship, the Church's worship comprised three distinctive features.

The first was the emphasis on the presence of the living Lord in their midst. Confession of faith proclaimed his lordship (see Phil 2:1; Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3). Hymns and odes praised his incarnation and saving work (Phil 2:6-11; Col 1:15-20; 1 Tim 3:16). Prayer was offered in his name (Eph 5:20; Heb 13:15). His work was declared (Col 3:16) and his will was sought (Eph 5:20-21). The cry of *marana tha*,

“our Lord has come,” (1 Cor 15:20) served as a characteristic devotional exclamation.

The second feature was the belief in the magnetic field of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit leads worshippers to confess Jesus’ lordship (1 Cor 12:3). He checks any tendency to erroneous worship (1 Cor 12:3; 14:32f.). He inspires prayer (Rom 8:26-27; 1 Cor 14:15; Eph 6:18) and opens the believer’s mind, heart, and voice in vocal praise (1 Cor 14:2, 15; Eph 5:19). He also imparts spiritual gifts (Rom 12; Eph 4; 1 Cor 12), which aid the worship and life of the body of Christ. Worship is by and in him (Phil 3:3; John 4:24).

A third distinctive element of the NT Church was the concern for building up the body of Christ. The presence of the *charismatic element* or the offering of enthusiastic praise and prayer under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit was prevalent. The *didactic element*, the ministry of teaching, instructing, prophesying, and discerning truth, which aims at clarifying the will of God, was a prominent part of worship. The *eucharistic element*, the offering of thanksgiving by prayer, hymns, and canticles, also featured prominently in the worship (in this respect the NT Church differed considerably from the synagogue). Finally, the *sacramental element*, baptism and the Eucharist, also played a dominant role in worship. Through these four elements, the body of faith was being built up.

### *Order of Worship*

The worship of the NT Church had two distinctive parts. The first part is what we would normally consider worship proper while the second part was a celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

Part 1: Congregational singing (Eph 5:19)

Recitation/chant of some formulary of belief (e.g., 1

Tim 3:16; 2 Tim 2:11-13)

Scripture reading (lengthy excerpts were used)

Sermons (usually more than one)

Prayer/Benediction

Part 2: Celebration of the Eucharist and/or Agape Meal

### **WORSHIP IN REVELATION**

No study of worship in the NT would be complete without considering Revelation since worship is an important motif of the book. In Revelation, worship is presented as the principal activity of created beings in the presence of God (see Rev 4-5) and carried a distinct eschatological bias with it (see Rev 14:6-7). A brief look at passages with worship as the significant motif demonstrates these points.

Rev 4 is a vision of God’s throne surrounded by the four living beings and the 24 elders. Awesome reverence and overpowering audio-visual displays mark the scene. These beings around the throne of God offer continuous praise to God for his might, eternity, and creatorship.

Rev 5 records the vision of Jesus, the Lamb, appearing before God's throne. Again, the scene is filled with songs of praise for the Lamb's salvific acts and worthiness. There are also prayers and an "Amen."

In Rev 14:6-7 worship is provided a distinctively eschatological bias. Worship is also portrayed as an acknowledgement of God's creatorship. Creation and eschatology now become focal elements for worship. This is true at the cosmic level, it is also true at the earthly level.

Rev 15:2-4 continues the worship motif of the previous chapters. In this worship scene, music and songs of praise are employed. God is praised for his righteous deeds.

Arguably, the most significant worship passage in Revelation is 19:1-10. It is also one of the most significant worship passages in the Bible. In this scene we find all of God's created beings, especially the redeemed, engaged in a mass, cosmic act of worship. There are numerous "Hallelujahs" and shouts of praise. God's justice and the wedding of the Lamb are the themes of praise. An "Amen" is pronounced and praise is commanded (v. 5). This worship takes place at the end of time when all of God's people through the ages are assembled on the crystal sea before his awesome presence. The passage demonstrates that worship is the most fitting way to address the Creator, Redeemer, and King of the universe.

### *Type of Worship*

The worship of Revelation is decidedly congregational, or more appropriately "cosmic." The four living beings, the 24 elders, the 144,000, all the angels of heaven, and the multitude of the redeemed, all worship God and the Lamb. Worship is presented in Revelation as the most appropriate way to approach the Almighty and the most apt expression of faith. Worship is the language of heaven, the angels, and the redeemed. Such worship awaits an eschatological fulfilment.

### *Emphasis of Worship*

The central focus of the worship in Revelation is God. This provides the book with a special flavour. This is not to say that such a flavour is absent elsewhere in the Bible. However, the sheer magnitude of the worship we encounter in Revelation paralyses the senses and challenges the imagination. Such is the force of the message of the book.

Revelation draws attention to the celebration of God's character. God in his creatorship, awesomeness, might, goodness, justice, and supreme worth is worshipped.

Revelation also draws attention to the celebration of God's creative and saving acts. God is not only the creator but also the redeemer. His ability to make and to remake is at the heart of worship in Revelation. This is why God is worshipped.

In Revelation, God is the only true object of worship. He is worshipped because of who he is and what he has done. Worship is the language of creation and faith.

## **PRINCIPLES OF WORSHIP IN THE NT**

Worship is as significant to the NT as it is to the OT. The ideas associated with worship in the OT are also observed in the NT. Nevertheless, the NT offers new insights into worship, new principles to be considered.

- Worship is a bond with the Lord Jesus Christ. The centrality of Jesus in the experience of the community of faith is the very essence of NT worship.
- Worship is Spirit-inspired. In the thinking of the NT writers, worship does not occur unless the Holy Spirit moves within the human heart and the community of believers. It is the inspiration of the Spirit that makes worship possible.
- Worship is about community building. It is in this most significant act of the body of faith that the community of believers finds its togetherness. Worship provides the best ambience for the growth of the Church. From this NT perspective, worship is not optional but essential to Christian faith.
- Worship is also Word-centred. The worship of the NT Church is very much centred on God's Word. In this sense worship is revelational and it demands an appropriate response to that revelation.
- Worship is praise-bound. If worship itself is the most important activity of the community of faith, then praise is the most definitive act of worship. The pages of the NT are littered with praises to God. While the NT does not offer a counterpart to the Psalter, praise is no less important. The large number of praise hymns in Revelation alone reminds us that praise is integral to biblical worship.
- Worship is the activity of the redeemed. The NT implies that the chief motivation for worship is the knowledge that God has redeemed us. Therefore, worshipping God is a response to this redemption.

Worship in the NT was largely non-liturgical with no worship order in evidence. There appears to be a great deal of freedom in the practical application of the principles of worship which enabled the Church to worship in such diverse places as homes, public halls, and river banks.

When the OT and the NT are put together we view the complete picture of worship as presented in the Bible. We cannot speak about biblical worship without proper consideration of these two sources and the information they supply. The two Testaments complement each other and their combined insight into worship is the foundation upon which all worship theology must be built.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE WORSHIP OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

This chapter traces the development of worship in the history of the Christian Church. It examines four specific periods: the Early Church (post-NT) period, the Catholic Era, the Protestant Era, and Seventh-day Adventist worship.

#### **The Worship of the Early Church**

In the post-Apostolic Era the worship of the Church underwent further development. Certain new elements crept into the worship of the Church. At the same time new tendencies also emerged. It is important to examine such long-term development from a historical perspective.

#### *Second Century*

This period marked the beginning of the standardisation of the Church's worship. During this period a rise in liturgical interest can be detected. In the document *Didache* (a rather dubious work) a Eucharist liturgy emerged. Elements of worship included Scripture, sacrament, psalmody and hymnody, and prayer. According to Justin Martyr (a 2<sup>nd</sup> century Church Father), two liturgies were in operation by this time. One was a Liturgy of the Word, the other, a Liturgy of the Upper Room (see the following outline). In the succeeding periods, this dual aspect of the Church's worship would remain in one form or another.

#### LITURGY OF THE WORD

Readings: Prophets, Epistles, & Gospels

Instruction & Exhortation

Common Prayers

Psalms & Hymns

#### LITURGY OF THE UPPER ROOM

Kiss of Peace

Offerings

Consecration Prayer: Thanksgiving, Anamnesis, Oblation, Invocation, Intercessions, and People's Amen

Communion

Dismissal

#### *Third and Fourth Centuries*

During the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, the worship of the Church remained in a somewhat fluid state. No definitive form of worship had as yet emerged. Nevertheless the liturgies became increasingly more developed and prescriptive. The bias towards form was slowly creeping into the Church. The following outline is an example of the liturgies of this period.

## LITURGY OF THE WORD

Readings: Law, Prophets, Epistles, Acts, Gospels, Letters from Bishops

Psalms sung

Alleluias

Sermon(s)

Deacon's Litany

Dismissal

## LITURGY OF THE UPPER ROOM

Deacon's Litany

Kiss of Peace

Offerings

Sursum Corda

Consecration Prayer: Thanksgiving, Sanctus, Thanksgiving, Words of Initiation, Anamnesis, Epiclesis, and Great Intercession

Lord's Prayer

Communion

Deacon's Litany

Dismissal

### *Type and Emphasis of Worship*

The worship of the Church during the post-Apostolic era was very much a congregational affair. Congregations (later to be called churches) sprouted all over the Mediterranean world. These congregations became the fulcrum of worship development.

While the Word, prayer, praise, and the Eucharist still dominated worship, a new emphasis, the use of liturgy, emerged during this period. Liturgical interests would flourish more and more as time elapsed. Such developments would, in time, completely dominate the worship scene and for several centuries worship and liturgy became synonymous.

### **The Worship of the Catholic Era**

During the period referred to as the 'Catholic Era' (5<sup>th</sup> century onward), the worship of the Church achieved its full liturgical bloom. There were two main liturgies that came to be used, the Eastern and the Western Rites. The differences between the two rites were minimal. The Eastern Rite was adopted by the Church in the eastern half of the Roman Empire and remains largely intact in the worship of Eastern Orthodox Churches (e.g., Greek, Armenian, Russian). The Western Rite, which was adopted by the Church in the western half of the Empire, offers much more in terms of progress and development.

### *The Roman Rite*

The origin and development of the Roman Rite prior to the 6<sup>th</sup> century are clouded in obscurity. Until the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the rite was in Greek. Early in the 4<sup>th</sup>

century the rite began to take on a Latin form. When Emperor Constantine legalised the Church in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the Eucharist was celebrated publicly. Texts related to the development of the Roman Rite from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries are scanty. However, from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries texts are far more numerous. The early Roman Rite (see outline below) appears to have followed a rite from the 5<sup>th</sup> century. The rite was simple, terse, austere, and rigid in economy of words, structure and ceremonies.

#### LITURGY OF THE WORD

Introit

Kyries

Celebrant's Salutation

Collects

Prophecy/OT Lection

Antiphonal Chant

Gradual

Alleluia

Gospel

Dismissal

#### LITURGY OF THE UPPER ROOM

Offertory

Salutation & Sursum corda

Prayer of Consecration: Preface, Proper Preface, Sanctus, Canon

Kiss of Peace

Fraction

Lord's Prayer

Communion

Collect

Dismissal

During the Middle Ages, several types of Mass were conducted:

- Pontifical High Mass. This was the typical mass. It was a sung mass and the celebrant was a Bishop with priests assisting.
- High Mass. This was also a sung mass but the celebrant was a priest with deacons assisting.
- Low Mass. In this mass there was no choir and no assistants. The mass was spoken and not sung.
- Missa Cantata. This was mass with a choir but without assistants. It was a sung mass.
- Missa Sicca. This was a dry mass. The elements of the Eucharist were not used. There was no communion.

The Roman Mass, as the rite of the Roman Catholic Church would eventually be known, attained uniformity shortly after the Council of Trent in AD 1570. As indicated in the outlines below, the liturgy of the Roman Mass became extremely complex and highly prescriptive. With this Mass, the worship of the Church reaches its pinnacle of form and structure.

#### LITURGY OF THE WORD

Introit

Kyrie eleison

Gloria in excelsis

Salutation & Collects

Epistle

Gradual

Tract/Sequence

Prayers & Preparation

Gospel

Preacher goes to Pulpit: Intimations, Bidding Prayers, Epistle & Gospel

Sermon

Nicene Creed

Salutation

#### LITURGY OF THE UPPER ROOM

Offertory: Psalm versus sung, Offering of bread (collect), Water to wine (collect), Offering of chalice (collect), Prayers, Blessing of incense, Censing of elements, Censing of altar, Censing of ministers, Washing of Celebrant's hands, Oblation, Secrets (collects)

Salutation & Sursum corda

Prayer of Consecration: Preface, Proper Preface, Sanctus, Elevation, Canon

Lord's Prayer

Pax & Fraction & Commixture

Agnus Dei

Celebrant's Communion: Collect, Kiss of peace, Collects, Bread, Thanksgiving, Cup

Communion Psalm: Cleansing of chalice, Collects, Covering of chalice

Salutation & Collects

Deacon's Salutation & Dismissal

Collect

Blessing of People

Last Gospel

In this particular rite, the Liturgy of the Upper Room became the centrepiece of the worship and its administration assumed elements that were far removed from

those of the NT Church. The worship was now focused on the worship leader rather than the worshippers. Worship became increasingly a performance of religious ritual. These developments would have a lasting impact upon Christian worship.

### *Type and Emphasis of Worship*

In theory, the worship of the Catholic Era was still congregational worship. In reality, it had become a spectator sport, a performance ritual for the Church's clergy. Gone were the informal and participative days of the NT Church.

The already existing emphases of worship were retained but new ideas were stressed during this period. Three rather significant ideas were introduced at this time. First, the period witnessed a paradigm shift towards a completely liturgical form of worship. There was an increasing bent towards form and order. Worship became more and more prescriptive. It would appear that uniformity in manner of worship became a predominant concern of the Church. The emphasis was now clearly on the use of liturgy.

Second, there was a renewed emphasis on the Eucharist. The ceremony of the Eucharist assumed a very high profile in the Church's worship. The development of separate liturgies for the Eucharist testifies to this. There was also a growing awareness of the special place that the Eucharist occupies in Christian worship.

Third, a new emphasis arose concerning the idea of 'celebrant'. A truly unique aspect of the Catholic Era was the understanding that worship, particularly the celebration of the Eucharist, was the task of a principal leader. This worship leader was known as the celebrant and was more often than not a member of the clergy. Christian worship shifted away from a laity-led activity to a clergy-led one. This would effectively push the clergy to the forefront of worship while the laity was relegated to the position of merely interested observers.

### **The Worship of the Protestant Era**

The rise of the Protestant movement in the 16<sup>th</sup> century brought sweeping changes to the Christian world. The Church became permanently split into two halves. The Protestant movement was precisely that, a *protest*. The protest was not only theological but also liturgical (though the latter may not have been as pronounced as the former). By looking at three of the main reformers it becomes clearer as to the changes that occurred.

#### *Luther's Rite*

Martin Luther's proposed changes, with regards to liturgy, were sharply contradictory. In theory, his concepts of worship were the most conservative among the reformers. In actual practice, Luther instituted drastic and far-reaching changes. His chief contribution has become known as the *Deutsche Messe* (German Mass) and was formulated in AD 1526. Luther simplified the Roman Mass considerably. While retaining some elements of its Roman predecessor, Luther's

Rite introduced new elements that expressed Luther's unique interests. The following outline provides a sample of Luther's Rite.

#### LITURGY OF THE WORD

Introit/German Hymn

Kyrie eleison

Salutation & Collect

Epistle

German Hymn

Gospel

Apostles' Creed

Sermon/Homily

#### LITURGY OF THE UPPER ROOM

Paraphrase of Lord's Prayer

Exhortation

Recitation of Words of Institution

Communion

Collect

Aaronic Blessing

#### *Zwingli's Rite*

Ulrich Zwingli's humanist background had an important effect on his concept of worship. He proposed that prayers should be more didactic rather than devotional. He did not regard the Lord's Supper as the norm for worship, did not favour frequent communion, and confined the communion to four times a year. His ideas were more radical than Luther's. Here is a sample of Zwingli's Rite.

#### LITURGY OF THE WORD

Ordinary Morning Service: Sermon, confessions

Offertory

Invocation

Collect

Epistle

Gloria in excelsis

Gospel

Apostles' Creed

#### LITURGY OF THE UPPER ROOM

Exhortation

Fencing of the Table

Lord's Prayer

Prayer of Humble Access

Words of Institution

Communion

Psalm  
Collect  
Dismissal

#### *Calvin's Rite*

John Calvin's main aim was to restore the Eucharist to its primitive simplicity and true proportions as the central weekly service. He also wanted to give Holy Scriptures their authoritative place in worship. His renowned Geneva Rite was formulated in AD 1542 and subsequently revised in AD 1547.

#### LITURGY OF THE WORD

Scripture Sentence  
Confessions  
Prayer for Pardon  
Metrical Psalm  
Collect  
Lection (Gospel)  
Sermon

#### LITURGY OF THE UPPER ROOM

Collection of Alms  
Intercessions  
Lord's Prayer  
Preparation of Elements  
Apostles' Creed sung  
Word of Institution  
Exhortation  
Consecration Prayer  
Communion  
Collect  
Aaronic Blessing

These reformers left an indelible imprint on the worship of Protestant Churches. While all three retained certain elements of the Roman Mass, it is quite apparent that they were also rather innovative with their ideas and liturgical suggestions. However, there is another rite that evolved during this period that would play an important role in the way Protestants worshipped.

The Protestant movement brought substantial changes to the Church in England. This was especially true in the area of worship. The so-called English Rite was based largely on the *Book of Common Prayer*. This book was first published in AD 1549 and subsequently revised in AD 1662. The liturgy generated by the *Book of Common Prayer* remains more or less intact to the present. Unlike its other Protestant counterparts, the English Rite bears greater resemblance to the Roman Mass as evidenced in the outline that follows.

## LITURGY OF THE WORD

Lord's Prayer by Celebrant

Collect for Purity

Decalogue with English Kyries

Collect for the King

Collect of the Day

Epistle

Gospel

Nicene Creed

Sermon/Homily

## LITURGY OF THE UPPER ROOM

Offertory: Scripture Sentences, Collection of alms, Preparation of  
Elements

Intercessions

Exhortations

Invitation

General Confession

General Ablution

Comfortable Words

Sursum corda

Prayer of Consecration: Preface & Propers (5), Sanctus, Prayer of  
humble access, Commemoration of Passion, Words of  
institution

Communion

Lord's Prayer

Oblation/Thanksgiving

Gloria in excelsis

Peace and Blessing

### *Type and Emphasis of Worship*

In keeping with the Church's experience through the preceding periods, the worship of the Church during the Protestant period was also largely congregational. However, there were shifts of emphasis that clearly distinguished this period from the previous one.

First, like their predecessors of the Catholic Era, the reformers were also very much driven by a sense that worship requires some sort of regulating. The dual liturgy of the previous periods is still visible in the worship of the Protestant Reformation.

Second, The Eucharist also continued to play a central role in the worship of the Protestant Churches. While concepts varied considerably, the communion itself was still viewed as a vital ingredient of worship.



Third, in harmony with the theological realignment of the Protestant movement, the Scriptures assumed their proper place in the Church's worship. Preaching, the proclamation of the Word, became and would remain an integral part of Protestant worship.

Fourth, the use of hymns that the congregation could sing was a significant innovation of the reformers. Hymnody not only restored greater congregational participation it also reduced the importance of the choir and celebrant. Worship once more became more participational.

All these changes meant that the Protestant Reformation ushered in a new era in the worship of the Church. It liberated worship from the liturgical bonds of the medieval period and restored the idea that worship is the concern of the congregation. Such ideas would have a profound influence on the worship of the Church.

The spirit of the Reformation outlived the reformers themselves. In the centuries that followed Christian worship would experience constant renewal as a result of movements such as the Wesleyan Holiness Movement (later called Methodism) and other Pietistic revivals. The shift from read prayers to spontaneous prayers, for instance, would spawn other movements such as the Great Awakening in North America.

### **Seventh-day Adventist Worship**

My personal background compels me to add the experience of my own denomination to this historical odyssey. As a Church that takes great pride in its Protestant heritage, the SDA Church possesses its own distinctive style of worship. SDA worship has also experienced moments of change through its history and currently the subject of worship is a focal point of substantial debate within the Church. Despite its brevity, the history of the SDA Church is quite colourful.

#### *Early Adventism*

Resources for the study of early SDA worship are scanty. Nevertheless, we know that the members worshipped in homes, large kitchens, barns, groves, and school buildings. The interest of the early members was more about the 'spirit' of worship rather than the form of worship. Prayer, Bible study, preaching, and singing were significant elements of worship. The worship itself was somewhat informal and quite dynamic.

#### *Order of Worship*

With the passing of time and the growth of the Church, more interest over form arose. Questions were posed about the need to regulate the worship services. The desire for greater unity within the Church provided an impetus in the search for a truly Adventist form of worship.

The first attempt at an order of worship is found in H. M. S. Richards' *Church Order*, which was published in 1906. In this predecessor to the *Church Manual*, the

following worship order was proposed: Introit, Meditation, Opening Hymn, Prayer, Second Hymn, Sermon, Closing Hymn, and Benediction.

The *Church Manual* of 1932 stressed reverence and pious decorum as essential ingredients of worship. It also stated that the Church prescribes no specific form but did provide a suggested order of worship. This order consisted of Invocation, Scripture Reading, Hymn, Prayer, Offering, Special Music, Sermon, Hymn, and Benediction. This suggested order of worship eventually attained an almost sacrosanct status and is the form of worship that most SDAs identify as Adventist worship.

Further work was carried out in the 1951 *Church Manual*, which described two important aspects of worship, the message of the word and congregational response. Prayer was regarded as the holiest exercise while the sermon was the most important part of worship.

### *Type and Emphasis of Worship*

Like its counterparts through history, SDA worship is also congregational. The gathering of the body of believers on the Sabbath is a distinctive feature of the SDA Church. However, Adventist worship has its own distinctive features.

In Adventist worship there is a great emphasis on the preaching of the Word. The sermon is central to Adventist worship and frequently this aspect of worship dominates and controls the worship service. This dominance of the sermon at times overshadows the participation of the congregation and places undue emphasis on the clergy.

Adventist worship also stresses reverence as an integral part of worship. This search for reverence was a factor that led to the attempt to regulate worship. The sense of the greatness of God has played a crucial role in moulding SDA worship. However, a somewhat skewed concept of reverence has led to many congregations being completely adverse to any form of expression in worship. This has often produced worship that is less dynamic.

Formalism is a natural consequence of the emphasis on reverence. A certain degree of unity does exist in the form and style of worship. However, such formalism has inadvertently reduced the role of the congregation while elevating that of the clergy. In this respect, Adventist history is a microcosm of similar struggles in the larger history of the Christian Church.

### **Principles of Christian Worship**

Having examined the principles of worship that emerge from the OT and NT data, we can now reflect upon the principles that are evident in the history of the Church's worship. Without replicating what had already been discussed in the earlier chapters, I will now briefly discuss seven specific principles of worship arising from this historical survey.

- Worship is revelational. Christian worship has normally held the Scriptures as normative not only to the life of faith but also to the worship of the faithful. The Word is central to worship and considerable attention, through readings and sermons, is given to the revelation of God through his Word.
- Worship is form-driven. Unlike the NT period, the worship of the Church through most of history has also been greatly driven by liturgical interests. There has always been this desire for order, form, and uniformity.
- Worship is Eucharistic celebration. The uniqueness of Christian worship has been its commemoration of the Eucharist. The communion has provided both a historical dimension to the church's worship as well as the link between all the various segments of the Church.
- Worship is sermon-centred. The proclamation of the Word has been and continues to be an integral part of the Church's worship. Worship is often associated with the need to make plain the will of God, hence the sermon.
- Worship is creedal. Throughout the centuries of Christian history, the recitation of some formulary of beliefs (creed) has been a part of Christian worship. Worship becomes, in a sense, a time when the body of believers acknowledge their oneness, theological and otherwise. A creed seems to serve this particular function.
- Worship is hymn-oriented. Music and worship seem bound together in the experience of the Church. The use of hymns in particular has greatly influenced the worship service. While there were times when singing may have been the role of appointed performers, as a whole history testifies to a simple fact, singing is a very Christian act. Without this congregational activity, worship would be incomplete.
- Worship is leader-controlled. The bias towards form, so prevalent in Christian worship, has resulted in worship that is very much leader-controlled. Worship is not so much what happens but what is carried out. In order that worship is carried out properly, it should be properly led.

It is difficult to imagine what Christianity would be like without worship. This one activity alone sets Christianity apart. While all religions do worship, the Christian approach to worship is truly unique. Moreover, history demonstrates that Christian worship is colourful and multifaceted.

## CHAPTER 5

### BIBLICAL PARADIGM OF WORSHIP

Having examined the biblical and historical data for worship, it is now time to reflect on the existence of a paradigm for worship. When all this data is collated, what picture emerges? Is there anything that we can truly consider as the biblical paradigm of worship? I believe that there is a paradigm that emerges from the biblical data that can be considered the biblical paradigm of worship. I also believe that this paradigm informs us as to the most essential elements which every worship service must contain.

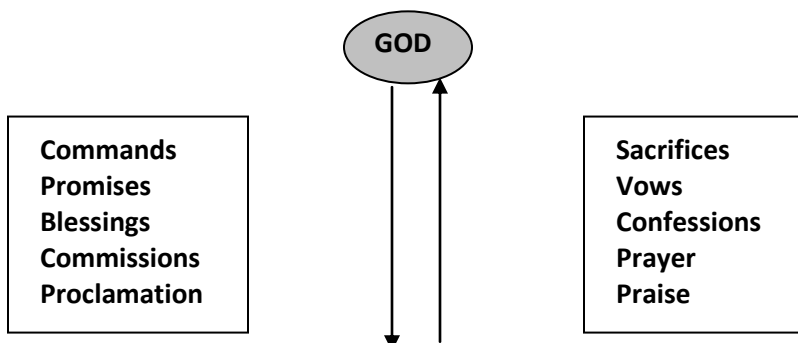
The biblical paradigm of worship consists primarily of two components: motion and communication. Whether a worship service meets the needs of the worshipper and whether God is encountered in worship largely depends on how these two components are utilised. Their presence (or absence) and proper balance (or imbalance) will greatly determine the quality (or lack thereof) of worship.

For the purposes of uncovering this paradigm the following biblical stories were considered: Noah's worship experience (Gen 8-9); Jacob's encounter at Bethel (Gen 28); Israel's Sanctuary (Exod 25-40); Solomon's Temple dedication (2 Chron 5-7); Isaiah's vision in Isa 6; the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2); and the eschatological data of Rev 4; 5; & 19.

#### **Motion in Worship**

In worship there is a movement between God and man. Each moves towards the other (see Diagram 3). God moves towards the worshipper(s) in terms of commands (the Sanctuary), promises (Noah and Jacob), blessings (Noah and Jacob), commissions (Isaiah), proclamation (Isaiah), and empowerment (Pentecost). The worshipper(s) moves towards God through sacrifices (Noah), vows (Jacob), confessions (the Sanctuary), prayer (Solomon), and praise (Revelation).

Diagram 3. Motion in Worship



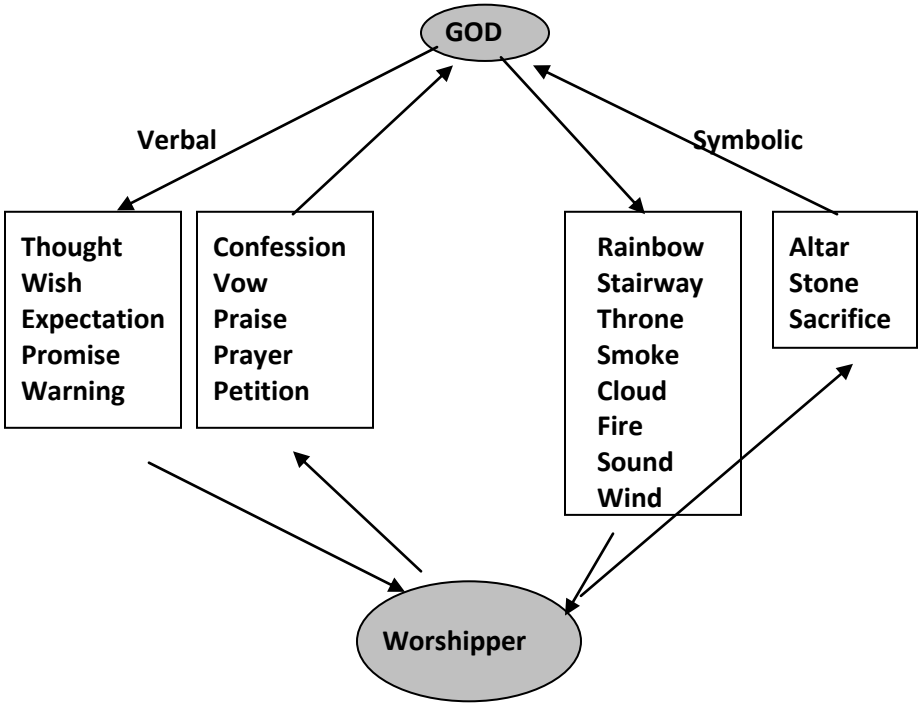


**Communication in Worship**

God and man do not merely move towards each other in worship, they also communicate (see Diagram 4). This communication involves both the cognitive and the affective aspects of the human brain. There is verbal (i.e., words, logic, analysis) and symbolic (i.e., emotion, imagination) communication. When God speaks to man he expresses thoughts, wishes, expectations, promises, and warnings all of which are forms of verbal communication. He also produces symbolic forms of communication such as rainbow (Noah), stairway (Jacob), throne (Isaiah), smoke (Isaiah), cloud (Solomon), fire (Solomon), sounds (Pentecost), and wind (Pentecost).

Human communication may also take verbal forms such as confessions (at the Sanctuary), vows (Jacob), praise (Solomon’s temple and Revelation), prayer (Solomon), and petitions or symbolic forms like altars built (Noah), stones consecrated (Jacob), sacrifices offered (at the Sanctuary), and prostration.

Diagram 4. Communication in Worship



Whenever motion and communication are properly utilised and maintained in optimum balance, genuine worship occurs. That is when we truly come into the presence of God in response to his self-revelation, salvific acts, and calling. That is true, biblical worship!

## **SECTION II: GOD WROTE THE SONG**

## CHAPTER 6

### MUSIC AND WORSHIP

This part of the book explores the use of music and song in the Bible and through the history of the Christian Church. It targets the most contentious area of worship, singing and music. Because of the excellent nature of his work, this section contains several excerpts from Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music*. This section also explores other questions of interest to worship leaders and church musicians and delves briefly into the issue of a theology of music.

#### **Song Through the Bible**

Gloria Gaither put it best when she wrote:

From father Abraham to John the Revelator, from the first century church to this moment, the people of God have always seen themselves as pilgrims, never settlers. "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through" is more than a line from an old song. The sojourner's theme has been told to children in stories, sent in letters of encouragements to friends, preached from pulpits, and whispered behind the closed doors of the underground church in times of persecution. But mostly, it's been sung. When kings were unjust, they sang of a kingdom whose builder and ruler was God. When the world seemed like a foreign country and when the strange language of power and materialism was the accepted tongue, these pilgrims reminded each other that they were natives of a far better place to which they were traveling. When they were separated, estranged or lonely they sang of a great homecoming when all the singers would one day be together around their Father's house.

The "biblical narrative makes a dramatic claim. It suggests that music has a power to penetrate the mind where other forces fail, breaking down barriers directly and immediately. The mysterious nature of this process and its potency have never ceased to intrigue philosophers and creative artists" (Wilson-Dickson, 9). Moreover, "music, like other arts, is itself a response to the pattern and order of God's creation. The composer Vaughan Williams was therefore able to observe that 'music is the reaching out towards the utmost realities by means of ordered sound'" (Wilson-Dickson, 11).

"Early references to music in the Bible are indirect, such as the following snatch of song recorded in the book of Numbers. 'Israel', God's people, are journeying to the land promised to them. Then it was that Israel sang this song" (Wilson-Dickson, 16).



“Sing out for the well that was sunk by the princes and dug by the leaders of the people with the scepter, with their staves” (Num 21:17)

One or two early songs are more vividly drawn, particularly the Song of Miriam in Exodus (Exod 15). After the building of the temple of Solomon (about 900 B.C.), the liturgy becomes sumptuous and spectacular (Wilson-Dickson, 17-18). At the dedication of the temple Solomon employed a 120-piece trumpet section and a 288 piece orchestra-choir to provide music for the occasion (see 1 Chron 25; 2 Chron 5:1-13; 7:1-10).

The book of Psalms “was compiled over a long period, its present form being established well after the exile and the re-building of the temple. Some of the titles, such as ‘a psalm of Asaph’ or ‘of the sons of Korah’, indicate the repertoire of a particular hereditary guild of musicians; others indicate the occasion on which the psalms were used; still others giving the name of the melodic formula used to accompany them” (Wilson-Dickson, 20). Perhaps those pilgrims sang these psalms.

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*Hinneh ma-tov (Ps 133)*

Hinneh ma-tov umanaim  
Shebet achim gam yachad  
Hinneh ma-tov umanaim  
Shebet achim gam yachad

Hinneh ma-tov, shebet achim gam yachad  
Hinneh ma-tov, shebet achim gam yachad

+++++

*Hodu (Ps 136)*

Hodu l’adonai ki tov, ki l’olam chasdo  
Hodu l’adonai ki tov, ki l’olam chasdo  
Hodu, hodu, hodu, hodu  
Hodu l’adonai ki tov  
Hodu, hodu, hodu, hodu  
Hodu l’adonai ki tov

+++++

The early Christians were also composing new songs in celebration of the faith. The “Gospel of Luke includes some songs which were perhaps already established in the worship of the NT Church by the time Luke recorded them. They are the song

of Mary (the Latin version is called *Magnificat*) in Luke 1:46-53, the song of Zechariah (*Benedictus*) in Luke 1:67-79, and the song of Simeon (*Nunc Dimittis*) in Luke 2:28-32” (Wilson-Dickson, 27).

### **The Gregorian Chant**

Pope Gregory the Great (A.D. 590-604) saw a need to unify the different forms of worship then in use. This harmonisation inevitably included the music used in liturgy, hence Gregory’s longstanding connection with church music, and particularly chant. “As part of the process of increasing the authority of the Church of Rome, Gregory strongly encouraged conformity in styles of worship. The differing Latin liturgies (Mozarabic, Gallican, Ambrosian, Celtic) were gradually absorbed into the Roman, with an inevitable effect on the melodies that characterized them” (Wilson-Dickson, 32).

However, “Pope Gregory, a great diplomat, administrator, and theologian, would probably be surprised to know that he is most widely remembered for the changes to the music for the Roman liturgy which took place during his papacy. This enduring attribution is the result of the apocryphal musical deeds that medieval scholars later invented for him. It is therefore an inaccurate though long-standing tradition which gives the name *Gregorian* chant to the richest collection of Christian music in the world” (Wilson-Dickson, 32).

The chant is plainsong—that is, irregular in its rhythm, and either sung solo, in unison or quite frequently “call and response” but always monophonic. The Text is always the psalms of the Bible. (Damien Ffrench cited in “Gregorian Chants” CD) The texts, all in Latin, come from the liturgy of the Church. The music itself—made of a single melodic line, sung in unison and free of rhythm, soaring into space with a calm certainty that is magical—forms the foundation on which all western traditions of song are built. The monks who sang them discovered the miraculous chemistry of words and music. Long, long ago, the equation became more sophisticated, more complex. The pure expression of Gregorian chant has never grown old. It never disappeared, and it still materialises to bathe the weary, worldly, unsuspecting soul in its blessing. (David Foil) Today the Benedictine monks have resurrected the chant in such pieces as *Puer Natus in Bethleem* and *Veni sancte spiritus*.

### **Martin Luther: Reformer and Musician**

The “depth of meaning of the Eucharistic feast encouraged Christians to celebrate it with particular solemnity even in the early days of the church. As a result, special musical traditions have accompanied it from the earliest times. . . . By the eleventh century, Mass was often celebrated with sufficient ceremony to justify it being termed ritual theatre. Its many striking visual symbols went hand-in-hand with elaborate music” (Wilson-Dickson, 43).

Martin Luther’s “background as an Augustinian monk had taught him the value of a devotional life of prayer and also gave him a deep love of music. Not only was

he profoundly familiar with the traditional Gregorian chant but he was trained as a singer and lutenist and able to compose adequately in the polyphonic style of the times. In common with the ancient Greeks, he knew the power of music, for good and ill" (Wilson-Dickson, 60). This led him to compose such great hymns as *A Mighty Fortress*.

+++++

A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;  
Our helper, he amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great, and armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing,  
Were not the right man on our side,  
the man of God's own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth His name, from age to age the same,  
And he must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,  
should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God hath willed  
His truth to triumph through us.  
The prince of darkness grim, we tremble not for him;  
His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure;  
One little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers, no thanks to them abideth;  
The Spirit and the gifts are ours through Him who with us sideth.  
Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also  
The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still  
His kingdom is forever.

+++++

Luther's "fundamental desire that Christians should worship God in sincerity and with understanding did not mean that he wished to abandon the Latin Mass. On the contrary, he suggested a double solution to the problem of congregational involvement, through the Formula Missae of 1523 and the German Mass in 1526" (Wilson-Dickson, 60).

The German Mass “was for the benefit of the local parish church, where songs, readings and prayers should be in a language that everyone could understand.” This “was a corporate act, shared by the congregation. No Christians were to be barred from entering, and both bread and wine were offered to everyone. Luther emphasized congregational participation in the music, too” (Wilson-Dickson, 60). Franz Schubert’s *Heilig ist der Herr* became part of the German Mass.

### **Johann Sebastian Bach: Church Musician Extraordinaire**

In its “embodiment of every facet of musical experience—the symbolic, the rhetorical or emotional, and the ecstatic or physical—Johann Sebastian Bach’s music finds a response with almost anyone. It can resonate with those who are sensitive to music on almost any level. It is compelling to the casual listener who expects immediate musical satisfaction. But equally it reveals unfathomable depths to those prepared to study its symbolic nature” (Wilson-Dickson, 100).

Bach’s “music inhabits such a broad area it cannot fail to continue to delight its hearers with revelations of beauty, whatever their expectations. That beauty is of eternal and abiding truths: created order and human relationships, the perfection of God’s universe and the agonies and joys of mankind’s struggle to find its place within it. . . . Bach was perhaps the last truly great musician who owed his living almost entirely to the church. Many others have since been employed by it, but the opportunities and expectation of musicians in this position have on the whole gradually declined since Bach’s time” (Wilson-Dickson, 100). The majestically serene *Jesu* and *Air* are typical of Bach’s music.

### **George Frederick Handel: The Messiah Man**

For the “congregation of most country churches, the music for which the eighteenth century is now remembered was almost unknown. But not altogether. Following his arrival in England in 1710, Handel had increasingly dominated the art-music of Britain. . . . For the London opera audiences he provided biblical oratorios to be performed during the Lenten season. These were operas in all but name—performed in the manner of opera, by opera singers, and in their theatres. Only the staging was missing” (Wilson-Dickson, 114).

The “work that he wrote in 1741 called *A Sacred Oratorio, Messiah* had an effect eventually reaching far beyond the circumstances of its first performances. *Messiah* was originally written for a charity concert at the New Music Hall, Fishamble Street, Dublin, of 13 April 1742. . . . What is more, *Messiah* was unlike any of Handel’s other oratorios. Not only was it contemplative of its theme rather than vividly dramatic, but the subject was Christ himself, unlike the other oratorios based almost exclusively on Old Testament figures. For some liberal thinkers, its serious Christian message was an uncomfortable intrusion into worldly and high-class entertainment. . . . *Messiah* in its entirety had no place in church worship. Nonetheless, its effect on Christian music (albeit delayed) was profound” (Wilson-

Dickson, 114). Pieces such as the *Hallelujah Chorus*, *Worthy Is the Lamb*, and *Amen* from the *Messiah* have blessed generations of believers.

### **Isaac Watts: Father Of English Hymnody**

The hymns that we sing in our worship services have a constantly unfolding history that began centuries ago. There was a time when congregations were mostly audiences, observers of dictated rituals. Hymns became important after the Reformation, when congregations became participants in worship. (Kathy Hart)

Christian hymns are the heritage of the church. They encapsulate our faith, enliven our spirits, and enrich our lives. The words of the writer are written on our minds, establishing and reaffirming the word of God. The music of the composer stirs our emotions and etches the word upon our memories. But above all hymns aid us in our worship of the One who is truly worthy of our praise. (Vivien Culver cited in "The Hymn Makers: Charles Wesley" CD)

The "writer who began the new era of the Christian hymn was Isaac Watts (1674-1748) whose hymns are still sung by every denomination today. . . . One of the reasons for the very widespread use of Watts' hymns down the ages was his ability to summarise universal Christian experience—sentiments with which all worshippers could identify." Watts "wrote over 400 hymns and psalm paraphrases, but he stood only at the start of a veritable explosion of hymn-writing" (Wilson-Dickson, 110-111).

Prior to 1694 metrical psalms were all that were sung in English churches. Tradition has it that about this time, Isaac Watts complained to his father that metrical psalms were the worst part of church worship. Like all good parents, Watts' father challenged him, "Give us something better, young man." The gauntlet was thrown down. The next 'Sabbath' the dissenting church in Southampton had a new song to sing:

Behold the glories of the Lamb!  
Amidst His Father's throne  
Prepare new honours for His Name  
And songs before unknown.

Watts was undoubtedly the greatest hymnwriter of his day, not simply because of the number of hymns he wrote, but because he was the first writer to convince church fathers "that it is proper to use spiritual songs of human composure as well as the Psalms of David" to worship God. A number of men had sought to do this in the past but where they failed Isaac Watts succeeded. We can only guess at the reason for his success. Whatever the reason we are the richer for this change of heart. Surely, however, his "human composites" were inspired by God. (Ray Bodkin cited in "The Hymn Makers: Isaac Watts" CD) Two of his best known hymns are *Joy to the World* and *I Sing the Almighty Power of God*.

+++++

Joy to the world the Lord is come!  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare Him room  
And heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth the Saviour reigns!  
Let men their songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains,  
Repeat the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrow grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make His blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of His righteousness,  
The wonders of His love.

+++++

I sing the almighty power of God  
That made the mountains rise;  
That spread the flowing seas abroad  
And built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained  
The sun to rule the day;  
The moon shines full at his command  
And all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord  
That filled the earth with food;  
He formed the creatures with His word  
And then pronounced them good.

There's not a plant or flower below  
But makes His glories known;  
And clouds arise, and tempests blow  
By order from His throne.

Creatures as numerous as they be  
Are subject to His care;  
There's not a place where we can flee  
But God is present there.

In heaven He shines with beams of love  
With wrath in hell beneath;  
'Tis on this earth I stand or move  
And 'tis His air I breathe.

His hand is my perpetual guard,  
He guides me with His eye;  
Why should I then forget the Lord  
Who is forever nigh?

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### **Charles Wesley: Indefatigable Hymnwriter**

The eighteenth century revival, now known as the Methodist movement, produced one of the most inspiring of all hymnwriters. His name was Charles Wesley (1707-1788). Apart from preaching, Charles Wesley's special gift was to encompass his Christian experience in hymns. These are:

. . . songs of individual experience, marking the successive stages of penitence, conversion, justification, pardon and sanctification in the life of the Christian pilgrim . . . (J. S. Curwen cited in Wilson-Dickson, 116).

Sometimes Charles' language is elevated, reflecting his mastery of the classics, but he could also write with the direct simplicity a child can understand. In the vivid imagery of Frederick Gill, these hymns 'gave wings to John's work' and encouraged its rapid spread, fixing the theology of revival firmly in the hearts of the people, who used them not only in corporate worship but also in personal devotions. In the opinion of Bernard L. Manning, the Congregational scholar, Charles Wesley's hymns are unique and constitute Methodism's greatest contribution to the common heritage of Christendom. But there can be little doubt that Charles himself would choose to be remembered in the words which are inscribed on his tombstone:

. . . A sinner saved, through grace forgiven,  
Redeemed from earth to reign in heaven . . . (Vivien Culver)

The impact on countless lives of many of Charles Wesley's 6500 hymns cannot be emphasised enough. *Love Divine* and *And Can It Be?* are two such hymns.

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Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven to earth come down.  
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,  
All Thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,  
Pure, unbounded love Thou art;  
Visit us with Thy salvation,  
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,  
Let us all Thy life receive;  
Suddenly return, and never,  
Never more Thy temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,  
Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing,  
Glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then Thy new creation,  
Pure and spotless let us be;  
Let us see Thy great salvation,  
Perfectly restored in Thee.  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before Thee,  
Lost in wonder, love, and praise!

+++++

And can it be that I should gain  
An interest in the Saviour's blood?  
Died He for me, who caused Him pain?  
For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

'Tis mystery all: the Immortal dies!  
Who can explore His strange design?



In vain the first-born seraph tries  
To sound the depths of love divine.  
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,  
Let angel minds enquire no more.  
He left His Father's throne above;  
So free, so infinite His grace,  
Emptied Himself of all but love,  
And bled for Adam's helpless race.  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;  
For, O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eyes diffused a quickening ray  
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light,  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread;  
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach the eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ, my own.

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### **The Spirituals**

By far the most dramatic developments in North America came with the Great Awakening at the end of the eighteenth century. The numbers of people caught up in the sweep of renewal were so great that buildings could not house them. Instead, huge throngs, black and white, would gather outdoors to worship for days on end. These were the great camp meetings.

Camp meetings "were an important basis for the growth of what are now known as spirituals. These songs, whether sung by blacks or whites, were essentially music of the countryside. The blacks brought special qualities to their spirituals, a background of field hollers and the ecstatic character of their African musical heritage" (Wilson-Dickson, 194).

The "words of the spirituals were directly biblical, drawn from passages which speak of liberation (Moses, Daniel and the book of Revelation were favorites) and adapted from popular English hymns, for example the popular hymns by Isaac Watts" (Wilson-Dickson, 194).

The music “tended to be the call-and-response type. This simple structure, so common in African traditional music, allows great freedom: no books were needed, for the chorus is easy to pick up and the solo calls can be improvised on the spot. All this was accompanied by hand-clapping and foot-stamping, creating a Christian protest music of distilled and concentrated ecstasy” (Wilson-Dickson, 195).

“White spirituals of the same period often adapted the texts of hymns in the same kind of way, perhaps repeating lines or adding a short refrain (like “Glory, hallelujah!”) between them, just like the blacks. The music was often borrowed or adapted from well-known folk-melodies” (Wilson-Dickson, 195). All time favourites include works such as *Go Down Moses* and *Ezekiel Saw de Wheel*.

### **Gospel Music**

The “first use of the term ‘gospel music’ in print was probably by Philip P. Bliss (1838-1876) in a collection of his music published in 1874.” These gospel songs “conveyed the simplest of Christian messages through music of emotional directness to huge numbers of people” (Wilson-Dickson, 200). Gospel song has over the years penetrated deep into the consciousness of all English-speaking countries.

While “the gospel sound has become thoroughly commercialized (well over 1000 radio stations are dedicated to it, promoting all the latest albums), it still has an important base in the independent churches of the Southern states—the Baptists, Methodists, and the Pentecostal and Holiness Churches” (Wilson-Dickson, 201).

There are two types of gospel music today: Gospel which is the form sung by African Americans and Southern Gospel which is a musical style related to country music. At the forefront of Southern Gospel music since the late 1960’s is William J. Gaither. Two of his all-time favourites are *Because He Lives* and *The Longer I Serve Him*.

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God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus,  
He came to love, heal, and forgive;  
He lived and died to buy my pardon,  
An Empty grave is there to prove my Savior lives

Chorus

Because he lives, I can face tomorrow,  
Because He lives, all fear is gone;  
Because I know He holds the future  
And life is worth the living just because He lives.

How sweet to hold a newborn baby,  
And feel the pride and joy he gives;  
But greater still the calm assurance,  
This child can face uncertain days because He lives.

And Then one day I'll cross the river,  
I'll fight life's final war with pain;  
And then as death gives way to victory,  
I'll see the lights of glory and I'll know He lives.

+++++

Since I started for the Kingdom,  
Since my life He controls,  
Since I gave my heart to Jesus,  
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.

Chorus

The longer I serve Him the sweeter He grows,  
The more that I love Him, more love he bestows;  
Each day is like heaven, my heart overflows,  
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.

Every need He is supplying,  
Plenteous grace He bestows;  
Every day my way gets brighter,  
The longer I serve Him, the sweeter He grows.

+++++

### **Contemporary Christian Music**

Contemporary Christian music is extremely varied. The label "contemporary" covers a variety of musical genres ranging from the middle-of-the-road songs of singers like Steve Green to the Hispanic beats of Jackie Velasquez to the country sounds of Susan Ashton to the folk ballads of Ray Bolz to the light rock of 4 Him and to the hard rock of Sonic Flood. Contemporary Christian music also covers a variety of acapella groups and re-workings of old hymns. The best way to proceed is by experiencing the music. Anyone who watches and listens to *Watch the Lamb* by Ray Bolz, *King of Glory* by Third Day, *Love Song for a Savior* by Jars of Clay, and *Let the Glory Come Down* by David Phelps comes to realise that contemporary Christian music exists on a very wide spectrum.

## Public Praise

A special genre of the contemporary Christian music scene is Public Praise, or alternatively Praise and Worship. Public Praise is often described as “taking the four walls off the church.” Begun in Great Britain, this fresh expression of worship involves uniting Christians in joyful processions and open air celebrations of praise, prayer, and proclamation.

Thousands of Christians have discovered a new boldness in confessing their love for Christ as they have joyfully poured out their praise, proclaimed His lordship, and prayed for His Kingdom to come to earth. Those who use such music see themselves first and foremost as worship leaders rather than performers. Perhaps it is best to experience Public Praise with some of the leading worship leaders of our generations. *Lift Up Your Heads* led by Graham Kendrick from England, *Sing for Joy* led by Don Moen from USA, *Power of Your Love* led by Darlene Zschech and Hillsongs from Australia, and *Agnus Dei* led by Michael W. Smith from USA are excellent examples of Public Praise.

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Lift up your heads O you gates  
Swing wide you everlasting doors  
That the King of Glory may come in

Up from the dead He ascends  
Through every rank of heavenly power  
Let heaven prepare the highest place  
Throw wide the everlasting doors

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If we call to Him, He will answer us  
If we run to Him, He will run to us  
If we lift our hands, He will lift us up  
Come now praise His name all you saints of God

Chorus

O sing for joy to god our strength  
O sing for joy to God our strength, our strength  
Draw near to Him He is here with us  
Give Him your love He's in love with us  
He will heal our hearts, He will cleanse our hands  
If we rend our hearts He will heal our land

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Lord I come to you  
Let my heart be changed, renewed  
Flowing from the grace  
That I've found in you  
Lord I've come to know  
The weaknesses I see in me  
Will be stripped away  
By the power of your love

#### Chorus

Hold me close, let your love surround me  
Bring me near, draw me to your side  
And as I wait, I'll rise up like the eagle  
And I will soar with you, your Spirit leads me on  
In the power of your love

Lord unveil my eyes  
Let me see you face to face  
The knowledge of your love  
As you live in me  
Lord renew my mind  
As your will unfolds in my life  
In living everyday  
By the power of your love

+++++

Alleluia, Alleluia, for the Lord God Almighty reigns;  
Alleluia, Alleluia, holy, holy, you are Lord God Almighty  
Worthy is the Lamb, worthy is the Lamb  
You are holy.

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### **Adventist Contributions**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has also produced its share of great music. Adventist music, like its theology, is very much eschatologically-driven. From the 1886 hymn *The Coming King Is at the Door* by F. E. Belden to the 1962 *We Have This Hope* by Wayne Hooper, Adventist songs continue to pay special attention to the promise of the second advent.

During the 1950's and 1960's millions of people around the world heard the unique sound of the King's Herald quartet, with songs like *Just a Little Talk with Jesus*, through the Voice of Prophecy Radio. In the 1970's we heard the Heritage

Singers singing such favourites as *If That Isn't Love*. Today we can listen to the truly dazzling sounds of Take Six with their inimitable rendition of *A Quiet Place*. Adventist music has also been very much oriented to the male voice with the presence of numerous quartets (e.g. The Heralds, The Ambassadors, etc.) and male choruses (e.g. Fifth Sabbath, Christian Edition, The Loma Linda Male Chorus, etc.).

### **Singing in Worship**

Singing has always played an important part in both biblical worship as well as Christian worship. We could ask ourselves the question: Why sing? First, singing is enjoined in Scripture (Ps 98:1, 4-6; Ps 100:2; Col 3:16). God clearly wants his people to sing. Second, singing provides us with the best means for extolling God (Ps 95:1-2). Third, singing is a way of teaching truth (Col 3:16). Last, singing is an evangelistic tool because it allows us to reach other people in a less threatening way. Singing (along with the other fine arts) supplies God's people with a bridge into the world around them, a world that may be resistant to the preaching of the Church.

As we scan the pages of Scripture, we discover that singing accompanied major events in the Bible. At creation the morning stars (angels?) sang (Job 38:7). During the Exodus the children of Israel sang (Exod 15:1-21). The Levites (and probably the people as well) sang at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron 5). The angels sang at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2). The Psalter, the longest book of the Bible, is a songbook and served as the songbook for both Israel and the Church. The Apostolic Church, the earliest group of Christians, sang as they worshipped God (Acts 2:46-47). Singing and worship are inseparable.

However, the most glorious song that God's people shall sing is yet to be sung for it will be sung in heaven itself. This is the great song that Scripture has entitled *The Song of Moses and of the Lamb*:

Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty.  
Just and true are your ways, King of the Ages . . .  
For you alone are holy . . . (Rev 15:36)

While on this side of eternity music will continue to play a dominant role in the worship of the church. Even in churches where congregational participation is limited, music plays a leading role. No one can deny the liturgical significance of music and as such this entails an examination of two highly salient issues.

### **Liturgical Situations**

While some may speak simplistically about the church's worship, reality is far more complex. Every congregation will encounter, in due time, a variety of liturgical situations that will demand its attention. Much of a church's liturgy incorporates elements that comprise the regular weekly worship of the church. It is in this setting that music is liturgically most significant. In such a setting music

can be utilised in three principal ways: as mood setter or time filler, as a means for congregational participation, and as performance. The exact interplay of these elements in any given worship service must be driven by the worship itself. To accomplish this, a functional worship ministry is greatly desirable.

However, there are other liturgical situations that perhaps require even greater care and planning. These situations may be occasional but they are no less important from a liturgical point of view. These include public evangelistic services, weddings, memorials and funerals, and baptisms. In order to create truly effective worship, appropriate music should be selected for each given situation. While wedding music will be celebratory in nature, music at funeral services will need to be far more contemplative. Again, careful planning should be exercised in each situation.

### **Theology of Church Music**

There are very few issues that will generate as much debate in local churches as music. Every generation argues for validity while critiquing the generations before and after. Frequently such debates are highly subjective and reduce themselves to empty discussions of personal tastes. At other times such discussions can profoundly impact the church's life. While this is not an attempt to provide a definitive theology of church music, it is an endeavour to examine the theological underpinnings of such a process. Every church should engage itself in the process and in doing so must direct its attention to five crucial factors.

### **The Power of Music**

A scan through the annals of history reveals that music has been used in a variety of ways. Hindu mystics used chants to elevate themselves to higher levels of spirituality. The Nazis employed music to create an entire generation of genocidal maniacs. The 'flower people' found the combination of music and drugs highly potent. In other words, music can inspire or destroy, it can elevate or degrade.

Christians have always known the power of music to assist in memorising Scripture, to aid in the teaching and learning of essential truths, and to create the proper atmosphere for worship. Churches have used songs to tell stories to children and to inspire adult members. Any theology of church music should take into account this dual nature of music.

### *Music is Amoral*

Many Christians are prone to label music as sacred or secular or assume music to be either holy or unholy. However, music carries no moral coding per se. The boundary between church music and its non-church counterpart is rather fuzzy at best. There is no clean white-black line to separate the two fields of music. Frequently the only defining boundaries pertain to content and functionality. These factors ultimately determine the appropriateness or inappropriateness for

church consumption. To argue otherwise is to step on very quirky grounds. It may be more productive to think in terms of the religious/spiritual functionality of any genre of music than to debate its morality.

### *Lyrics, Tunes, and Instrumentation*

In Bible times, the difference between sacred and secular was non-existent. The Psalms, which were composed for worship, employed folk tunes. The same instruments were used at social occasions and in liturgical situations. The Song of Songs includes a *wasaf*, a romantic wedding celebration song. In a world with an integrated worldview, life and religion were simply parts of the same whole. Our worldview is far more influenced by Greek dichotomy and contemporary Christians must wade through concepts and values that conflict with each other. A theology of church music should be cognizant of this dualistic worldview.

### Traditional or Contemporary?

Perhaps the most contentious issue that confronts the church relates to the traditional-contemporary debate. It should be noted that not everything contemporary is bad, nor is everything good. The same however can be said of tradition. History demonstrates that tradition has its place in providing continuity and a degree of certainty to life and faith. Yet tradition can also inhibit progress. Perhaps a simple caution is in order: the past is a good classroom but it may not be a good home. To insist solely on tradition in a world of incessant change may render a church's worship obsolete and irrelevant. By the same token, to depend entirely on the contemporary may produce a worship that is overly experimental. Some blend of these two elements may be more desirable. A careful balance of traditional and contemporary should provide a church with a greater sense of continuity while not impeding its progress.

### *What Language to Use?*

Every generation speaks its own "language," it has its own worldview, and it expresses itself in its own style. This is true in fashion, entertainment, the arts, and worship. This is not simply a matter of following the latest fad. There is a deeper need for each generation to "find" itself. It is insufficient to simply follow the paths of others. To avoid cultural and religious stagnation, it is necessary to find a path most suited to the age. In the words of Robert Frost: "I came upon a fork in the woods, and took the path less travelled on. And that has made all the difference." Not only must each generation speak its own "language," but so must each culture. Liturgically complete church music must not simply utilize translations, it must also be true to its social and cultural contexts. Such missiological concerns should be at the heart of any theology of church music.



## **SECTION III: WORSHIP IDEAS**

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **WORSHIP LITURGIES/ORDERS/SCRIPTS**

This section is a compilation of worship liturgies, bulletin ideas and scripts of worship programmes. The bulletin ideas included here are taken from actual worship services. With each liturgy, the name of the church is provided as well as the date when the worship occurred. Songs that are used in these services can be replaced with appropriate alternatives. The songs listed in this collection were the songs that were originally used in the worship.

The scripts included here also come from actual worship experiences. Again the name of the church and the date of the worship are supplied. However, some scripts are undated and this is due largely to oversight. Furthermore, the majority of these scripts were used for youth worship services and are probably best suited for that.

Most of the liturgies included here require a larger number of participants and may not work as well for smaller congregations. However all the services can be adapted to suit any particular church. This collection is really intended to simply serve as a resource book. It is hoped that this resource will enhance the worship experience of the church.

Most worship resources do not provide actual worship services. Frequently the ideas suggested have not come from actual worship experiences but rather are proposed worship ideas. A collection containing actual worship experiences can fill a niche in this market of worship resources. It is hoped that worship leaders and pastors will find this compilation beneficial. All the ideas, worship liturgies, and worship scripts available in this collection are the product of personal work. The scripts are also original and, wherever possible, acknowledgement is made of the sources from which additional material is taken.

**Sample 1**

The following service was used at the Jurong English SDA Church, Singapore, on 4 August 1990.

THE CHURCH AT WORSHIP

*God Calls Through*

Introit

Call to Worship: AH 849

Meditation: "Spirit of the Living God" (AH 672)

Invocation

*We Answer In*

Hymn of Praise: "All Creatures of our God and King (AH 2)

Prayer of Intercession

Tithes & Offerings

[Offertory Hymn: "Lord of all Good" (AH 635)]

*God Speaks Through*

Story

Song

Scripture: Exod 3:13-15

Sermon: "The God Who Is There"

*We Respond With*

Hymn of Commitment: "O God Our Help" (AH 103)

Prayer of Consecration

Hymn of Affirmation: "We Have this Hope" (AH 214)

## Sample 2

This service was used at a Pathfinder Sabbath at SAUC Church, Singapore, on 21 September 1991.

### *The Worshipping Church*

King's Business

Processional

Pledge and Law  
Pathfinder Song

Invocation

Hymn of Praise: "All Glory, Laud and Honour" (AH 230)

Pastoral Prayer

Offerings

Special Music

Scripture Reading

Sermon: "God's Plan for Youth"

Investiture Service

Hymn of Response: "My Eyes Have Seen the Glory" (AH 647)

Benediction

Recessional

### **Sample 3**

This liturgy was employed at the Jurong English SDA Church on 19 December 1992.  
The worship was a commemoration of Christmas.

THE WORSHIPPING CHURCH

Call to Worship: Ps 148

Sing His Praise (congregation)

Return His Blessings

Worship Him: "For this Purpose"

Proclaim His Word: Luke 2:8-20

Preach His Message: "Christmas in Your Heart"

Accept His Benediction

Announcements

**Sample 4**

This liturgy was utilised by the Jurong English SDA Church on 26 December 1992.

THE WORSHIPPING CHURCH

*God Meets with His People*

Contemplate His Goodness (AH 683)

Consider His Work

Convoke His Presence (AH 767)

Summon His Power

Sing His Praise (AH 73 & 693) [congregation]

Request His Grace

Return His Blessing

Present His Children

Praise His Name

Proclaim His Word: Acts 2:4-47

Preach His Message: "That Which Jesus Loves Most"

Affirm His Will (AH 348)

Accept His Benediction

Adopt His Promise (AH 673)

### Sample 5

The following service was designed as a prayer. It was used at the Jurong English SDA Church on 9 January 1993. The bulletin incorporates both Sabbath School and Worship service into the prayer

Dear Father, we come to offer you

#### OUR LEARNING

When we sing praises  
and offer our prayer to you  
We lift our thoughts to you  
We view your mission work  
We learn of our Sabbath School's progress  
We study your word

#### OUR WORSHIP

By contemplating your work  
We worship you in song  
and in prayer  
We bring to you our children  
our gifts  
and our praises  
We listen to your word (Lam 5:19-22)  
and your servant: "When Answers Aren't Enough"  
We respond to your voice in song  
and in prayer

#### OUR SERVICE

[Announcements and activities section]

Amen!

## Sample 6

This liturgy was designed for a Small Group Ministry Sabbath held at SAUC Church in 1995. The Liturgy incorporated both Sabbath School and worship.

SGM Preamble (introduction)

Psalm Praise: (congregation)

Ps 98 – AH 33

Ps 103 – AH 1

Ps 42 – “As the Deer”

Ps 136

Psalm Prayer

SGM Thought: “Why Small Group Ministry?”

SGM Activity: (congregation)

“Getting to Know You”

“5 Finger Prayer”

SGM Study Time

Congregational Concerns

Praise: AH 470, 560, & 16 (congregation)

Prayer

Offering

Song of Praise

Scripture: Prov 11:30

Sermonette: “How to Revive a Dead Church”

SGM Call

Consecration



### **Sample 7**

The following worship was designed and presented by the youth of SAUC Church in 1995. The "Sharing" segments were carried out by individual members.

Prayer

Special Music: "Understanding Heart" (solo)

Songs: (congregation)

"This Is the Day"

"Time Is Ticking Away"

"O Day of Rest and Gladness"

Sharing

Special Music: "Praising the Name of the Lord" (quartet)

Sharing

Songs: (congregation)

"Joyful, Joyful"

"Redeemed"

Sharing

Songs: (congregation)

"The Blood"

"We Are the Reason"

Sharing

Offering

Sermonette: "Sabbath and Life"

Benediction: "The Lord's Prayer"

### **Sample 8**

The following liturgy was designed for and utilised by the St. Paul's United Church of Christ, Watervliet, Michigan, at their sesquicentennial celebration, 30 April 2000. The liturgy emulates the most distinctive literary device in the Hebrew Bible known as chiasmic/inverted parallelism. In this device, a series of thought lines (A-B-C) are directly paralleled by corresponding but inverted thought lines (C-B-A). The device was used to format poetry, narratives, and even entire books of the Bible.

Processional Hymn # 331: The Church's One Foundation

Pastoral Prayer:

Presentation to the Lord

Praise: "Clap your Hands, All Ye Nations"  
(choir)

Scripture Readings:   Exod 3:1-5  
                                  Rev 3:7-13

Spoken Word: "Sacred Space"

Praise: "Sing Praise" (choir)

Presentations to the Church

Closing Prayer

Recessional Hymn # 338: We Are God's People

Benediction and Meal Grace

### **Sample 9**

The following liturgy was used at a baptism Sabbath by Mission College Church, Thailand, on 23 February 2002. The worship format, which included Sabbath School, followed a climactic/staircase parallelism structure. The liturgy should be read from the bottom up.

Greeting the Candidates  
**Benediction**

Congregational Pledge

Baptism & Praise  
Examining Candidates & Church

**Sermon** "Clean"

**Special Music** (Male chorus)

Offering

**Responsive Reading** AH 765

**Hymn & Prayer** AH 300

Welcome

**Brass Blast** (band/CD)

**Class Study**

**Testimonials**

Songs of Praise (**congregation**)

### **Sample 10**

This worship was employed at a gathering of the Singapore Adventist Mission on 31 July 1993. The worship was part of a Mission-wide programme and the experience was called the "Open Church." All the 'Praise' segments were sung by the congregation. For the 'Sharing Scripture' segments individual members were selected in advance and they chose their own texts. The 'Thought' segments involved individual members sharing their thoughts on a pre-selected text.

Musical Prelude (musicians)

Praise 1: "I Love You Lord"

Praise 2: "Majesty"

Intercession

Praise 3: "Redeemed"

Affirmation of Love (Congregation)

Sharing Scripture 1

Sharing Scripture 2

Sharing Scripture 3

Affirmation of Gifts ["This Is My Father's World"] (Congregation)

Affirmation of Praise

Thought 1: Ps 119:9-11

Thought 2: Ps 119 18-20

Thought 3: Ps 119:30-32

Praise 4: "I Know Whom I Have Believed"

Sharing Scripture 4

Sharing Scripture 5

Sharing Scripture 6

Scripture Praise: Ps 27:1-6

Praise 5: "How Great Thou Art"

Benediction

### Sample 11

This was a worship experience of the Singapore Adventist Mission held on 23 October 1993 again utilising the "Open Church" concept. The theme of this worship was "People of God." In this worship there is a recurring idea, which is expressed through a song that the congregation sang at regular intervals throughout the service. The recurring nature of the theme augments its importance in the minds of the participants. In each 'Words of Affirmation' segment three members were called upon to share their thoughts.

Praise: "People of God"

Prayer: Litany

Praise: "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"

Prayer

Praise: "The Church Has One Foundation"

Prayer

Words of Affirmation: "Why Is It Important to be Part of a Church?"

Praise: "People of God"

Responsive Reading

Story

Responsive Reading

Words of Affirmation: "What I Like Most About My Church!"

Praise: "People of God"

Sermonette

Offering

Praise: "People of God"

Benediction

## Sample 12

The following worship liturgy was developed for an outdoor worship of the SAUC Church held on 15 October 1994. Since the worship took place outdoors, there is a decided focus on things of nature in this worship

Celebrating God in Nature:

*"All Creatures of Our God and King"*

*"Butterfly Song"*

*"I Sing the Mighty Power of God"*

*"Destiny"*

*"Willow in the Wind"*

*"How Great Thou Art"*

Scripture in Antiphony: Ps 24

Prayer

Nature Game

Celebrating God through Song

Meeting God in His Word (Offering)

Celebrating God in Nature and the Word:

*"Ascribe to the Lord" (Ps 29)*

*"Unto Thee O Lord" (Ps25)*

*"O God Our Help" (Hymn & Ps 90)*

*"Rejoice the Lord Is King" (Hymn & Phil 4:4)*

*"Rejoice in the Lord Always" (Phil 4:4)*

*"Sacrifice of Praise" (Heb 13:15-16)*

Prayer

Celebrating God through Song

Scripture in Tongues: Ps 96:10-13 (in different languages)

Scripture Praise: Ps 29

Nature Praise

Nature Nugget: "God the Creator"

Praise & Prayer: "Does Jesus Care?"

### Sample 13

“Enduring Praise” was the worship service presented by the SAUC Singers at SAUC Church on 31 May 1997. A full script accompanied this worship. The worship was thematic and involved an exchange between choir and congregation.

#### ENDURING PRAISE

“Majesty” (choir and congregation)  
Prayer  
“Lord, I Lift Your Name on High” (choir)  
“The Spacious Firmament” (duet)  
Praise Statements  
Praise Texts  
Children’s Praise: “He’s Got the Whole World”  
“The Lord Is My Light” (solo)  
“He Is Our Peace” (choir)  
“He Is Able” (choir)  
“Joyful, Joyful” (congregation)  
“Only by the Blood of the Lamb” (choir)  
“ . . . .”(trio)  
“Sacrifice of Praise” (congregation)  
Offering  
“Holy City” (solo)  
“Victory Chant” (choir)  
Prayer

[The following is the script for “Enduring Praise.”]

“Majesty” (choir and congregation)

Prayer

**Reader:** Of all the activities that God’s people carry out, none is deemed more appropriate than praise. The angels of heaven around God’s throne constantly offer praise. God’s people on earth are instructed to do likewise. Even the things of nature proclaim praise to God. In the earliest Christian hymn we find these words: “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil 2:9-11). Praise is meant to be an enduring experience. It is no wonder that we discover praise proclamations such as this: *Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and praise!* (Rev 5:12)

Praise has but one purpose, to glorify God. “So that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, it is written: *Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name. . . . Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people . . . praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples*” (Rom 15:9-11). Praise that endures will always seek to lift up the name of Christ.

“Lord, I Lift Your Name on High” (choir)

**Reader:** It is not only men and angels that give glory to God. All of nature itself exists for this very reason. “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard” (Ps 19:1-3).

The spacious firmament on high,  
With all the blue, ethereal sky,  
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,  
Their great original proclaim.  
The unwearied sun from day to day  
Does his Creator’s power display,  
And publishes to every land  
The work of an almighty hand.

What though in solemn silence all  
Move round the dark terrestrial ball?  
What though no real voice or sound  
Amid their radiant orbs be found?  
In reason’s ear they all rejoice  
And utter forth a glorious voice,  
Forever singing as they shine,  
“The hand that made us is divine.”

“The Spacious Firmament” (duet)

Praise Statements

Praise Texts

Children’s Praise: “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”

**Reader:** Praise that endures sees God for who he really is and what he is capable of doing. “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against



me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the Lord” (Ps 27:1-6).

“The Lord Is My Light” (solo)

**Reader:** If praise is the acknowledgement of God’s presence and providence, and if praise is the invitation for God to assume control of our lives, then we discover that with such praise comes the tranquillity of soul that we all seek. With enduring praise we find peace. Jesus promised us this: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). Praise that endures enables us to see Jesus as our peace.

“He Is Our Peace” (choir)

**Reader:** Praise such as we find in Scripture does not only open our eyes to the peace of Christ, it also enlightens us to the possibility that such a God is more than able to accomplish whatever he chooses to do for us. The apostle Paul wished this for the Church: “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with his power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fulness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever” (Eph 3:16-21). Enduring praise helps us to focus on this God who is truly able.

“He Is Able” (choir)

“Joyful, Joyful” (congregation)

**Reader:** Perhaps, the most poignant picture of Scripture is that of Jesus as the sacrifice for our sins. “Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment

that brought us peace was upon him; and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isa 53:4-6). The most profound of all reasons for praising God is the sacrifice of Jesus for only by the blood of the Lamb can our wretched lives ever be salvaged.

"Only by the Blood of the Lamb" (choir)

**Reader:** At the very end of time, around the throne of God Almighty, we shall hear the entire universe ring out with a symphony of praise that is truly enduring. "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: *To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power, for ever and ever! (Rev 5:13) Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for true and just are his judgements. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants. Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, both small and great! Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready" (Rev 19:1-2, 5-7). With a thousand tongues the redeemed themselves shall praise their Saviour.*

"O for a Thousand Tongues" (trio)

**Reader:** Scripture compels us "through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name" (Heb 13:15).

"Sacrifice of Praise" (congregation)

Offering

**Reader:** When the final chapter of earth's history is told we have been promised a new home in which all of God's redeemed shall dwell. "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. . . . Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev 21:1-4). At that time we shall see Jesus in all his splendour and triumphantly march through the portals of time into eternal life. And our praise shall indeed be enduring praise.

"Holy City" (solo)

“Victory Chant” (choir)

Prayer

### Sample 14

This worship was held at Mission College Church, Thailand, in 2001. The worship was thematic and the script is included. This worship derives its format directly from the biblical text, in this case 2 Chron 20. The worship requires the use of a narrator (storyteller) and costuming and dramatisation add to the ambience of the worship.

*THE BATTLE BELONGS TO THE LORD*  
(2 Chron 20)

The Battle of life (Storyteller)  
“The Battle Belongs to the Lord” (Congregation)

News of War (Messenger)

Prayer of Supplication (King Jehoshaphat)  
“Be Strong and Take Courage” (Solo)

The Lord’s Message (Jehaziel)  
“By My Spirit” (Congregation)

The Challenge (King Jehoshaphat)  
“The Battle Belongs to the Lord” (Levites – men)

The Battle Is Over (Storyteller)  
“Awesome God” (Congregation)

The Battle of Life (Storyteller)  
“Let Us Worship Lord Jehovah” (Small group)

Prayer of Thanksgiving (Storyteller)

[The following is the script for “The Battle Belongs to the Lord.”]

**Storyteller:** A long time ago lived good King Jehoshaphat of the Kingdom of Judah. Jehoshaphat walked in the ways that his ancestor King David had followed. He sought the ways of God and followed all his commands. Jehoshaphat’s heart was totally devoted to God and God blessed him immensely. God gave Jehoshaphat wealth and honour. The nations around him were filled with the dread of the Lord and Jehoshaphat’s kingdom experienced a period of unprecedented peace.

King Jehoshaphat lived in Jerusalem and often travelled among his people and inspired them to turn to God. He instructed his courtiers to be faithful in their duties and to carry out their responsibilities with an awareness that they were

serving the Lord. King Jehoshaphat frequently exhorted his people and his courtiers to be faithful to the Lord and to trust him.

{“The Battle Belongs to the Lord”}

One day, news of war reached King Jehoshaphat’s throne room.

**Messenger:** O great King Jehoshaphat, a vast army is coming against you from the south and from the east. It has already reached the En Gedi and is at this very moment preparing to launch a crippling strike against Judah. What shall we do, O King?

**Storyteller:** Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to enquire from the Lord as to the course of action he should take. He proclaimed a fast in the whole kingdom. The people came from every town to seek help from the Lord. King Jehoshaphat stood up in front of this vast assembly of his countrymen, in front of the Temple of God, and prayed.

**Jehoshaphat:** O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hands and no one can stand up against you. O our God, did you not drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel and give this land to them? Your people have lived in this land and have built a Sanctuary for you. We stand in your presence, O God, before this Sanctuary that bears your name, and we cry out to you in our distress. O Lord, hear us and save us. Our enemy is all around us and is preparing to attack us and we have no power to resist such a vast enemy. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you. Save us, O God!

{“Be Strong and Take Courage”}

**Storyteller:** Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jehaziel . . .

**Jehaziel:** Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all you who are God’s people! This is what the Lord says to you, “Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. Tomorrow march down against them. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you. O people of God, do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you!

{“By My Spirit”}

**Jehoshaphat:** Listen to me, O people of God! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld! Have faith in his prophets and you will be successful!

**Storyteller:** King Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord and to praise him for the splendour of his holiness. And they went out at the head of the army and sang . . .

{“The Battle Belongs to the Lord”}

**Storyteller:** As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set up ambushes against the enemy army and they were defeated. The people of God did not have to lift a sword. Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah returned to Jerusalem with great joy for the Lord had given them cause to rejoice. The fear of the Lord came upon all the neighbouring kingdoms when they heard how the Lord had fought for his people. And God gave King Jehoshaphat and his kingdom rest.

{“Awesome God”}

**Storyteller:** Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the life of faith is a battle. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world. Our battle is against the spiritual forces of evil, against the enemy of the Lord. We are called upon to put on the armour of God and to stand firm against the schemes of the evil one. However, we must remember that Jesus is our Warrior. Jesus is the one who fights this battle. The battle does not belong to us; the battle is God’s. If we put our faith in him and in his promises; if we arm ourselves with the shield of faith; if we put on the breastplate of righteousness; if we wear the belt of truth and the helmet of salvation; if we wield the sword of the Spirit, God’s Word; then we shall see the victory Jesus awaits to grant us. Be strong and take courage. Do not be dismayed for the Lord is your Warrior. Let us worship our Lord with all earnestness!

{“Let Us Worship Lord Jehovah”}

{Storyteller prays}

### **Sample 15**

This worship was completely multilingual as evidenced in the theme of the worship. A partial script was included. Almost every item in the liturgy was performed in different languages. This liturgy is especially appropriate for multilingual churches. The liturgy also calls for the reading of appropriate texts at each stage of the worship but it does not include a sermon. The worship was conducted on 29 September 2001 at Mission College Church.

#### *THE NATIONS OF HEAVEN*

March of the Nations (Isa 35:8, 10)

(congregation enters--wearing cultural costumes--sound of march music)

#### **Reader:**

When God made Adam and Eve, he commanded them to “be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth.” From the beginning it was God’s intention to create a race of beings that would be marked by great diversity. Embedded in our first parents were the genetic codes necessary for the multiplicity of peoples that we now see on earth.

It was not until Genesis 10 that we first read of this march of nations, all descended from one family, Noah’s. When God confirmed a covenant with Abraham, he informed him that “all the nations of the earth” would be blessed through him. The anticipated future of the creation narrative had become the fulfilled reality of covenant.

On Mt Sinai, God chose one nation to represent him. Israel was selected to be the conduit for God’s ultimate purposes. She was also chosen because she herself was a mini-collection of nations and encapsulated the greater purpose of God.

Through the prophet Isaiah and his contemporaries, God foretold of the streaming of the nations to Mt Zion. Here we are given a preview of a new highway on which only the redeemed will walk as they journey toward Zion their heavenly home.

In the great commission of Matthew 28, Jesus directed his disciples to “go and make disciples of all nations.” In this gospel endeavour we encounter the fruition of the purpose of God: the salvation of the very nations he had created. In one final display, we are shown in Revelation 19 that the nations of the redeemed will gather before the throne of God, standing on the crystal sea, proclaiming the praises of their Creator and Redeemer. The God, whose love of colour is so amply demonstrated in the material cosmos, will accept without reservation the adulation of the nations of heaven as they bow in worship.

Heaven will be as ethnically diverse as earth is. The nations of heaven will be as colourful as the nations of earth are. Today we have been provided with a foretaste of what heaven will be like. In as much as God's will on earth has always been the diversity of nations bound together by one Creator, so will God's will in heaven be the nations of heaven assembled around the throne of their Creator. No finer future, no purer vision, awaits God's people. May all of us here determine in our hearts to be present in that great march of the nations of heaven.

Praises of the Nations (Ps 96:1-3)  
(Songs should be multilingual)

Prayers of the Nations  
(Prayers in several languages)

Praises of the Nations (Ps 96:7-9)

Gifts of the Nations  
(Offerings)

Praises of the Nations (Ps 99:1-3)

Proclamations of the Nations: Isa 2:2-5  
(Scripture read in several languages inclusive of Hebrew if possible)

Praises of the Nations (Ps 108:3-5)

Blessings on the Nations (Ps 128:5-6)  
Let us pray: May the Lord bless you from Zion  
so that you may see Jerusalem prospering all the days of your life.  
May you live to see your children's children.  
Let there be peace in Israel!



### **Sample 16**

This service was developed for an Adventist Youth Association rally held on 23 March 2002. The service was held in Mission College Church. The liturgy consisted of three parts. Parts one and three took place outside the sanctuary while the second part occurred in the sanctuary. The service calls for the use of biblical costumes and the dividing of the entire congregation into Israelite tribes. The choristers should be all men to simulate the role of the Levites in biblical worship services. The worship is a re-enactment of the bringing of the Ark to Jerusalem by King David (see 2 Sam 6).

#### *YAHWEH ON HIS THRONE*

##### Part 1:

The tribes form outside of and process to the sanctuary to the sound of trumpets blaring

##### Part 2:

Praises and Scripture: Levites & Congregation

Tribal History

(A monologue by court historian)

Song: "Father Abraham"

Royal Speech

(King David)

Tribal Prayers

(The tribes pray in their groups led by tribal leaders)

Song: "Unto Thee O Lord"

Priestly Blessing

(The Aaronic blessing pronounced by High Priest)

Song: "Shalom"

##### Part 3:

The tribes reassemble outside the sanctuary for supper

### **Sample 17**

This worship liturgy revolves around a monologue. In this case, the monologue was derived from the 'memoirs' of one of Jesus' lesser known disciples, Judas Thaddeus. The liturgy is simple but the monologue involves the use of projected scenes from the life of Jesus. The liturgy is especially suited for an Easter service. No script was involved. The worship took place at Mission College Church on 30 March 2002.

#### *MEMOIRS OF A FORGOTTEN DISCIPLE*

Slide and Prayer

Song: "I Walked Today where Jesus Walked" (solo)

Monologue

(The person doing the monologue was dressed in biblical times costume and the monologue followed the following sequence)

*Slides of Jerusalem*

*Slides of the Upper Room*

*Slides of the Garden of Gethsemane*

*Slides of Caiaphas' steps*

*Slides of the Via Dolorosa*

Song: "Via Dolorosa"

Slide of Simon of Cyrene

Song: "Watch the Lamb" (dramatised)

*Slides of Golgotha*

*Slides of the Cross*

*Slides of the Garden Tomb*

*Slide of the Resurrection*

Song: "Tears, Hopes, and Promises" (duet)

Song: "Because He Lives" (congregation)

Prayer

### Sample 18

The following liturgy was thematic and fully scripted. This was a two-part liturgy, conducted at Mission college Church on 17 August 2001, and incorporated both the Sabbath School and Worship service.

#### *MOUNTAINTOP*

Shabbat Shalom (congregational greetings)

Prayer

Praise:

“God Will Make a Way”

“There Is a Quiet Place”

“Holy Lord”

“Our Father”

The Problem with Prayer (skit)

Study Time

Shabbat Shalom

Prayer

Praise: “I Love You Lord”

Prayer

Praises:

“Glorify Thy Name”

“All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name”

“Empower Me”

Litany of Intercession

Prayer

Praise: “Farther Along”

Prayer

Offerings:

“My Eyes Have Seen the Glory” (band)

Praise: “There Is None Like You”

Scripture: Rom 8:28-39

Sermon: “Mountaintop”

Song: “He Leadeth Me”

Blessing

[The following is the script for “Mountaintop.”]

Shabbat Shalom

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, be with us through the days of our Mission College life. Sometimes we may forget you, but please do not forget us. Help us to live in such a way that we please you. Forgive us when we do wrong; help us to respect our

teachers; and to do all that we can to make this campus a happy place. Be with those of us who have special problems so that we may learn to trust you through hard times. Amen.

**Praise:** (congregation) “God will Make a Way” “There Is a Quiet Place” “Holy Lord” “Our Father”

**The Problem with Prayer:** (this is a dialogue between God [\*\*] and someone praying)

“Our Father in heaven . . .”

\*\*Yes?

Don’t interrupt me, I’m praying.

\*\*But you called me.

Called you? I didn’t call you. I’m praying. “Our Father in heaven . . .”

\*\*There you did it again.

Did what?

\*\*Called me. You said, “Our Father which art in heaven.” Here I am . . . what’s on your mind?

But I didn’t mean anything by it. I was, you know, just saying my prayers for the day. I always say the Lord’s Prayer. It makes me feel good, kind of like getting a duty done.

\*\*All right. Go on.

“Hallowed be Thy name . . .”

\*\*Hold it. What do you mean by that?

By what?

\*\*By “hallowed be thy name?”

It means . . . It means . . . Good grief, I don’t know what it means. How should I know? It’s just part of the prayer. By the way, what does it mean?

\*\*It mean honoured, holy, wonderful.

Hey, that makes sense. I never thought about what “hallowed” meant before. “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

\*\*Do you really mean that?

Sure, why not?

\*\*What are you doing about it?

Doing? Nothing I guess. I just think it would be kind of neat if you got control of everything down here like you have up there.

\*\*Have I got control of you?

Well, I do go to church.

\*\*That isn’t what I asked you. What about your bad temper? You’ve really got a problem there, you know. And then there’s the way you spend your money—all on yourself. And what about the kind of books that you read?

Stop picking on me! I’m just as good as some of the rest of those people at church.

\*\*Excuse me. I thought you were praying for my will to be done. If that is to happen, it will have to start with the ones who are praying for it. Like you, for example.

Oh, all right. I guess I do have some hang-ups. Now that you mention it, I could probably name some others.

\*\*So could I.

I haven't thought about it very much until now, I really would like to cut out some of those things. I would like to, you know, be really free.

\*\*Good. Now we're getting somewhere. We'll work together, you and I. So my victories can truly be won. I'm proud of you.

Look, Lord, I need to finish up here. This is taking a lot longer than it usually does. "Give us this day our daily bread."

\*\*You need to cut out the bread. You're overweight as it is.

Hey, wait a minute! What is this, "criticise-me-day?" Here I was doing my religious duty, and all of a sudden you break in and remind me of all my hang-ups.

\*\*Praying is a dangerous thing. You could wind up changed, you know. That's what I'm trying to get across to you. You called me, and here I am. It's too late to stop now. Keep praying, I'm interested in the next part of your prayer . . . (pause). Well, go on.

I'm scared to.

\*\*Scared? Of what?

I know what you'll say.

\*\*Try me and see.

"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us."

\*\*What about Pat?

See. I knew it. I knew you would bring him up! Why Lord, he's told lies about me, spread stories about my family. He never paid me back the money he owes me. I've sworn to get even with him.

\*\*But your prayer? What about your prayer?

I didn't mean it.

\*\*Well, at least you're honest. But its not much fun carrying that load of bitterness around inside, is it?

No. But I'll feel better as soon as I get even. Boy, have I got some plans for that neighbour. He'll wish he had never moved into this neighbourhood.

\*\*You won't feel any better. You'll feel worse. Revenge isn't sweet. Think of how unhappy you already are. But I can change all that.

You can? How?

\*\*Forgive Pat. Then I'll forgive you. Then the hate and the sin will be Pat's problem and not yours. You will have settled your heart.

Oh, you're right. You always are. And more than I want to revenge Pat, I want to be right with you. (pause) . . . (sigh) All right. All right. I forgive him.

\*\*There now. Wonderful! How do you feel?

Hmmm. Well, not bad. Not bad at all. In fact, I fell pretty great! You know, I don't think I'll have to go to bed uptight tonight for the first time since I can remember. May be I won't be so tired from now on because I'm not getting enough rest.

\*\*You're not through with your prayer. Go on.

Oh, all right. "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

\*\*Good! Good! I'll do that. Just don't put yourself in a place where you can be tempted.

What do you mean by that?

\*\*Don't turn on the TV when you know the laundry needs to be done and the house needs to be picked up. Also about the time you spend coffeeing with your friends, if you can't influence the conversation to positive things, perhaps you could rethink the value of those friendships. Another thing, your neighbours and friends shouldn't be your standard of "keeping up." And please don't you me for an escape hatch.

I don't understand that last part.

\*\*Sure you do. You've done it a lot of time. You get caught in a bad situation. You get into trouble and then you come running to me, "Lord, help me out of this mess, and I promise you, I'll never do it again." You remember some of those bargains you tried to make with me?

Yes. And I'm ashamed Lord. I really am.

\*\*Which bargain are you remembering?

Well, there was that time Jill was gone and the children and I were home alone. The wind was blowing so hard, I thought the roof would go any minute and tornado warnings were out. I remember praying, "Oh God, if you spare us, I'll never skip my devotions again."

\*\*I protected you, but you didn't keep your promise, did you?

I'm sorry Lord, I really am. Up until now I thought that if I just prayed the Lord's Prayer every day, then I could do what I liked. I didn't expect anything to happen like it did.

\*\*Go ahead and finish your prayer.

"For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever."

\*\*Do you know what would bring me glory? What would really make me happy?

No, but I'd like to know. I want to please you. I can see what a mess I've made of my life. And I can see how great it would be to really be one of your followers.

\*\*You just answered the question.

I did?

\*\*Yes. The thing that would bring me glory is to have people like you truly love me. And I see that happening between us. Now that some of these old sins are exposed and out of the way, well, there is no telling what we can do together.

Lord, let's see what we can make of me, okay?

\*\*Yes, let's see!

Amen. (Author unknown)

**Study Time:**

**Shabbat Shalom:**

**Prayer:** Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden; cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Praise:** "I Love You Lord" (congregation)

**Prayer:**

Praise the Lord for sunshine  
Praise the Lord for rain  
Praise the Lord for pleasure  
Praise the Lord for pain  
Praise the Lord for lessons learned  
Through every joy and sorrow  
Praise the Lord for the days gone by  
And for each tomorrow.

**Praise:** "Glorify Thy Name"  
"All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name"  
"Empower Me"

**Litany of Intercession:**

**Leader:** Gracious God, who loves all and forgets none, we bring to you our prayer for all your children, for all whom we love, watch over and care for;

**People:** Hear us, O God.

**Leader:** For all prisoners and captives, and all who suffer from oppression, that you will manifest your mercy toward them and make all hearts as merciful as your own;

**People:** Hear us, O God.

**Leader:** For all who bear the cross of suffering, the sick in body or mind;

**People:** Hear us, O God.

**Leader:** For all those who are troubled by the sin or suffering of those they love;

**People:** Hear us, O God.

**Leader:** For all who are absorbed in their own griefs, that they may be raised to share the sorrows of others

and know the saving grace of the cross;  
People: Hear us, O God.  
Leader: For all perplexed by the deeper questions of life and  
overshadowed with doubt, that your light may  
guide them;  
People: Hear us, O God.  
Leader: For all who are tired by temptations or weakness,  
that your mercy may be their strength;  
People: Hear us, O God.  
Leader: For all who are lonely and sad in the midst of  
others' joy, that they may know you as their friend  
and comforter;  
People: Hear us, O God.  
Leader: For the infirmed and aged and for all who are  
dying, that they may find their strength in you and  
light at evening time;  
People: Hear us, O God.  
Leader: For all forgotten by us, but dear to you;  
People: Hear us, O God.  
Leader: O compassionate God, hear our prayers, answer  
them according to your will, and make us channels  
of your infinite grace, through Jesus Christ, we  
pray.  
All: Amen.

**Prayer:** Thank you Father for the tears that have carried me to the depth of your love. How could I have known your fulness without the emptiness, your acceptance without rejection, your forgiveness without my failure, our togetherness without that dreadful loneliness. You have brought me to Gethsemane, and oh, the joy of finding you already there. Amen. (Bonnie Barrows Thomas)

**Praise:** "Farther Along"

**Prayer:** All good gifts around us come from you, O God. You have given us life and new life in Christ. As you have given us gifts, so we offer you gifts that we may be gifts to one another, even as Jesus so taught and lived. Amen.

**Offerings:** "My Eyes Have Seen the Glory" (congregation)

**Praise:** "There Is None Like You"

**Scripture:** Rom 8:28-39



**Sermon:** "Mountaintop"

**Song:** "He Leadeth Me"

**Blessing:**

May the Lord, mighty God, bless and keep you forever;  
Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavour;  
Lift up your eyes and see his face and his grace forever;  
May the Lord, mighty God, bless and keep you forever.

### **Sample 19**

The following worship was held at the Jurong SDA Church on 26 March 1994. This worship was partially scripted.

#### *THE DAY THAT NEVER ENDS*

Songs:            “Hail Him the King of Glory” (AH 202)  
                      “Gleams of the Golden Morning” (AH 205)  
                      “Jesus Is Coming Soon”  
                      “Jesus Is Coming Again” (AH 213)  
                      “*We Know Not the Hour*” (AH 604)

Prayer:

Offering:

Scripture: AH 747

**Narrator:** The Bible has a great deal to say about prophecy; things which have since already come to pass, events which are happening right now, and God’s incredible look into the future. The end . . . and the beginning. God’s Word is a reliable account of tomorrow’s history, today. . . .

**Reader:** During the forty days after his crucifixion, Jesus appeared to the apostles from time to time, actually alive. And proved to them in many ways that it was really he himself they were seeing. And on these occasions he talked about the kingdom of God. It was not long afterwards that he rose into the sky and disappeared into a cloud, leaving them staring after him. As they were straining their eyes for another glimpse, suddenly two white-robed men were standing among them and they said: “Men of Galilee, why are you standing there, staring at the sky? Jesus has gone away to heaven and someday, just as he went, he will return.”

Song: “He Will Return” (congregation)

**Reader:** 1 Thess 4:16-17

**Narrator:** In God’s own timetable, his children will be invited to be guests at a great feast of celebration . . . the wedding banquet of the Lamb. Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb!

Song: “Feast of the Lamb” (solo)

**Reader:** Matt 24:36-42

Song: “Watching and Praying” (congregation)

**Narrator:** Jesus' disciples asked him, "What events will signal your return and the end of the world?" Jesus told them, "Don't let anyone fool you, for many will come claiming to be the Messiah and will lead you astray. You will hear of wars and rumours of wars. Nations will rise against each other. There will be famines and earthquakes. Men will be tortured, and killed, and hated because of their commitment to Christ. Many will betray and hate each other. False prophets will appear. Sin will be rampant. The good news of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, so that all nations will hear it, and then, finally, THE END WILL COME!" To some people this may sound despairing, but think about it . . . we have already seen his prophecy fulfilled. HIS COMING IS NEAR!

Song: "He Will Return" (congregation)

**Narrator:** Few people in this world deny that these are critical times, that a world blow-up of major proportions is close at our doorstep. It is becoming increasingly more difficult to keep the lighted fuse around the world from exploding. TIME WILL RUN OUT!

**Reader:** Matt 24:15-22

Song: "Watching and Praying" (congregation)

Song: "He Will Return" (congregation)

**Narrator:** There is yet more tribulation to come, greater than the first. And seven trumpet judgements shall come upon the earth.

**Reader:** Rev 16:2

**Reader:** Rev 16:3

**Reader:** Rev 16:4-7

**Reader:** Rev 16:8-9

**Reader:** Rev 16:10-11

**Reader:** Rev 16:12-16

**Reader:** Rev 16:17-21

**Narrator:** This is our hope that our Lord is coming back to earth to take us home to be with him. This is our hope that we will live with Christ forever in that glorious day that never ends.

Song: "We Have this Hope" (congregation)

**Narrator:** Are you ready to meet God on that day? Have you received God's son, Jesus Christ, as your Saviour? Remember, the purpose of all prophecy is to tell about Jesus. You must decide for sure. Life with Christ is an endless hope; without him it is a hopeless end.

Song: "Are You Ready for Jesus to Come?"

Prayer Session: (congregation)

## Sample 20

The following was a Friday night vespers held at Mission College in 2001. The music in this worship is CD or video based. All the songs were performed acapella. The service should commence and end with prayer.

### aka Akapella

**Narrator:** A time-honoured tradition of Christian music is the art of acapella singing. This form of singing both highlights and celebrates God's purest musical gift: the human voice. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, acapella singing experienced a dramatic revival. However, its roots resonate deep in history, in the plainsong style of a single melodic line, sung in unison and free of rhythm that is traditionally referred to as the Gregorian chant. The chant dominated the church's music for a thousand years. In the following rendition, the classic chant, *Puer natus in Bethlehem*, has been revived by the Benedictine monks of Santo Domingo de Silos.

Song: Puer natus in Bethlehem

**Narrator:** In the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, acapella was more often than not associated with male quartets. An all-time favourite is the song *Just a Little Talk with Jesus* popularised by The Heralds.

Song: Just a Little Talk with Jesus

**Narrator:** Reared in the repression of slavery, the spirit of multitudes of African Americans displayed itself in song and produced a unique musical genre: the "spiritual." To lift themselves above their enslavement, these oppressed souls found solace in Scripture and they turned its stories, history, and prophecies into songs. ReGeneration provides a masterful redress of a classic spiritual: *Ezekiel Saw de Wheel*.

Song: Ezekiel Saw the Wheel.

**Narrator:** Bearing the distinctive, though contemporary, ethos of the African American musical genre is the acapella singing of a group of six young men who call themselves Take 6. Here is an old classic, *He Never Sleeps*, executed in the unique style of Take 6.

Song: He Never Sleeps.

**Narrator:** Acapella singing is not limited to the western church. It has also impacted Christian music elsewhere in the world. Listen as The Ambassadors from Nigeria celebrate their faith in God's purposes for their continent in *Chanter L'unite*.

Song: Chanter L'unite.

**Narrator:** Scripture has always been a rich source of Christian songs. The following piece by the Maranatha Singers is a compelling rendition of Isaiah's encounter with God. With a blend of chant and contemporary, the song is titled simply, *Isaiah's Song*.

Song: Isaiah's Song.

**Narrator:** The success of acapella singing is its ability to move across musical genres. In true southern gospel style, using a simple three-part harmony, is this powerful performance of the great hymn, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, by The Martins.

Song: Holy, Holy, Holy.

**Narrator:** An example of simple yet truly evocative acapella singing is *Lamb of God* by an unnamed group of Christian artistes.

Song: Lamb of God.

**Narrator:** Acapella singing at its quintessential best is represented by the music of four young men who call themselves Acapella. In their exceptional blend of sounds comes *Hush!*, a song that reminds us that sometimes it is in silence that we know God best.

Song: Hush!

**Narrator:** The epitome of acapella singing, the yardstick by which all acapella groups must measure themselves, is GLAD. These five young men represent the ultimate in acapella singing. The consummate mastery of weaving intricate harmonies together and the ability to push the human voice to its limits, set GLAD apart. This compelling rendition of the hymn *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee*, is typical of the inimitable style of GLAD.

Song: Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee.

**Narrator:** "Hallelujah!" Hosanna!" "Make a joyful noise to the Lord!" "Sing to the Lord a new song!" These are catch phrases in the Bible, whose writers constantly urge us to ever ascending heights of adoration. This crescendo of praise reaches its peak in the celebration of the redeemed who stand before God on the crystal Sea. In that final moment, the human voice will again resonate through eternity as the wonders of our God are sung. As you exit this sanctuary, keep a song in your hearts and on your lips, for God delights in hearing you sing.

## Sample 21

This worship was an Easter service held at Mission College Church in 2002. This was a complex worship that involved music and drama. The worship was designed as the memoirs of Mary Magdalene. This worship was a dramatised monologue and was fully scripted. The worship commenced and concluded with prayer.

### Mary Magdalene

My, how the years have flown by. Everything is still so vivid in my mind that it appears as if it had all happened just yesterday. But . . . no, it has been a while now. Yet, how can I ever forget? How can I ever forget him, the one person who touched my life as no one else can? After all these years, it still seems like a dream. I can scarcely believe what has happened to me. Hmmm . . .

I was just an innocent child at Bethany. My parents died early and I never really knew them. The only family I had, were my brother, Lazarus, and my sister, Martha. They were both good people, but I really missed my parents. At times I thought that God was punishing me for some unknown sin for taking my parents so early from me. While the years dulled the pain of that loss, I still missed them so much, especially my Father.

When I was old enough, Lazarus and Martha took me to Synagogue. I can still recall my very first visit. I was so excited that my brother, bless his heart, had to remind me that women must be especially quiet in Synagogue. "Why is that so?" I thought to myself. Not that I really cared then, mind you. I was somewhat surprised when Martha and I were ushered up to the gallery. "Are women always treated so differently?" I mused. I was so frustrated that I could not really see what was going on below, with the curtain and all . . .

Somehow, through the cracks I caught sight of him, the Hazan. He was handsome with a full beard; he looked so dignified and learned; he was so fatherly. Everyone called him Simon. Little did I realise what was about to transpire. Simon seemed really interested in me and at first I was very happy to have a father figure in my life. But somehow, one thing led to another, and before I could blink my eyes my life had turned upside down. Using his considerable ecclesiastical leverage, Simon forced me to keep silent.

[Mary enters, pacing slowly]

I was so ashamed of myself that I ran away. All I could think of was to get as far away from Bethany as I could. I don't know for how long I travelled, but eventually I found myself in Magdala. I was hungry, I was tired, I was penniless. I tried to find a job, I really tried, but no one would hire a strange girl; besides, I had no skills. What was I to do?

I did learn something from Simon, I learned what it is men wanted most. In desperation, I figured that I might as well make a living somehow. Soon I had a lot of friends, men friends, who seemed to need my special touch. And Magdala was a good place for this. I was soon wealthier than any other woman, or man, in town. Of course, all the women avoided me and, sometimes, even called me names. But . . . life was good and I didn't care. After all I was now well-known, I was Mary of Magdala.

One day I heard about this exciting new preacher. Not that I was religious or anything like that. Who in my profession went to Synagogue? Those Synagogue people, why they would stone you first before they let you in. But my friend said that I should go and listen to this man. "He is something special," he said. You know I was as curious as everyone else, and so one day I went.

[Mary at seaside – Jesus talking to crowd]

There he was, by the seaside; there were thousands of people. I was dumbfounded. Where did all these people come from? "What is his name?" I asked someone. "Joshua," I was told. "Where's he from?" "Nazareth." Nazareth? How interesting!

At that moment he turned and our eyes met. His face was ruggedly handsome; his eyes seemed to penetrate right into my soul. I swear, I thought that he could read my thoughts. I remember squirming uncomfortably. Then he began to speak; in that strong yet gentle voice of his. I can't remember everything he said that day. This I do remember: my life was turned upside down, yet again. While I did not get to speak personally to him for some time, I knew then, as I know now, that no one knew my heart better than he did.

[Song: "No One Knows My Heart" (solo) – Mary sits and contemplates]

I knew at that moment what I had to do. But executing it, well, that was something else. I wanted to leave Magdala right away and get a new start. I wanted to return to Bethany and see how my brother and sister were doing. But one excuse or another kept me from following through on this newfound sense of self worth. I visited Jesus several times. Not once did I feel judged or condemned. It seemed almost as if he carried each of my failures. Even then I knew that no one would ever love me so much.

The time finally arrived. I picked up my belongings, especially my treasured, and very expensive, alabaster jar filled with pure nard, and headed home, for Bethany. All along the way I wondered about the reception I would receive.



What would Lazarus and Martha say? Was Simon still around? What would the neighbours say? Had they heard about my life? Had they met Jesus?

I was unprepared for the homecoming. It seemed that everyone had met or heard Jesus and their lives were as transformed as mine was. I even heard that Simon had met Jesus. In fact, it appears Simon had contracted leprosy and was then healed by Jesus. I was, strangely relieved to hear that, but I wasn't anxious to see Simon. I wanted to keep that chapter firmly closed.

It seemed that my stay home would be a happy one after all, but it wasn't. I can't say how soon after I arrived home that it happened. It seemed that time had stood still. All of a sudden, without warning, the sky caved in and I found myself in a black hole. My brother fell very ill and there was nothing anyone could do about it. We tried all the treatments available, but he kept deteriorating. Jesus was far away, he was always so busy, and at first we thought it best not to burden him. But in total desperation, we sent a message to Jesus. I will never forget the resentment I felt when the messenger brought back news that Jesus was not coming!

[Mary parading in anger and anguish around the house]

How could he treat me this way? Did I mean nothing to him? Is this the kind of love he so profusely spouted in his sermons? Why? Why? My mind went numb with pain as I watched my beloved brother deteriorate and then pass away. I remember thinking, "Surely, even God couldn't be this unfair! But then again, maybe he was!" Was this the sort of religion that Jesus taught? Why wouldn't he help us? Are we not his friends? Hadn't he been a welcomed guest at our home? Couldn't he do me this one favour?

With heavy hearts we laid Lazarus to rest in the family tomb. As they rolled that stone over the entrance, I felt as if my world had closed in around me. This new beautiful sunshine I had experienced was now overcast with dark clouds. Would I ever find my way out of this shadow land again? Every day I visited my brother's tomb, hoping against hope for a miracle. I was angry with Jesus and yet, strangely, hopeful.

[Mary meets Jesus at the tomb of Lazarus]

Four days later we heard news that stirred up all my anger and hope. Someone ran breathless to our house and told Martha and me, "Jesus is in town! Jesus is in town! He wants to see the tomb!" My anger welled up inside me as I quietly thought, "How dare he come now! How truly cold-hearted!" Yet, I found myself running to him, almost magnetised by the mere thought of his

presence. My sister had gotten to Jesus first. By the time I reached him, he was already at the tomb. Still overcome by a sense of betrayal, with tears rolling down my face, all I could do was blurt out, "If you had been here, my brother would not have died!" He looked at me, and there were tears in his eyes, and his voice trembled as he softly asked, "Where have you laid him?" Everything became a blur from there.

The next thing I knew? There was Lazarus, outside the tomb, and he looked as if he had not been anywhere. My mourning suddenly turned to dancing and my tears of pain became tears of joy. How can I possibly forget that moment! I recall the thought that crossed my mind: when Jesus is four days late, he is still on time.

[Song: "Four Days Late" (solo)]

It was then that I knew I had to do something special for Jesus. I had to redeem myself and thank him properly. But I was troubled. His disciples were telling us that Jesus' mood had turned drastically sombre and he was sounding almost suicidal. I pondered these developments in my heart. None of them made any sense. But I thought it best to leave it alone.

Not long after this I learned that Simon was throwing a big banquet to honour Jesus. Of course I knew I would not be invited. Yet something inside told me that this would be the best time to express my gratitude. Would a better time present itself? I was convinced it would not. All I had to do was figure out a way to crash that party!

[Jesus and disciples at Simon's house partying – Mary enters to anoint Jesus]

When I walked into that room, I could feel hundreds of eyes turn my way. I felt as if I would burn up. I knew what most of them thought of me, especially Simon. But, I did not care. I had a mission and I would not be deterred. When I got to Jesus (what a long walk it seemed), I fell sobbing at his feet. I broke my favourite jar of nard and poured it all on his feet and wiped them with my hair. All my past sins seemed to well up inside me and I felt as though I might explode. Then Jesus touched my arm and looked into my eyes, and, you know what, I knew everything was all right! I am sure I heard a chuckle in his voice as he told those party animals that my little act would be retold time and time again.

[Song: "Broken and Spilled Out" (duet)]

[Sudden scene change – Mary at the garden tomb looking for Jesus]

That was the darkest Sabbath I have ever known. Time stood still. I thought that my heart stopped beating. How could this have happened? How could God have allowed this to take place? Where is the justice in all this? Is this how his kingdom was to end? How could Jesus have permitted those unclean Gentiles to manhandle him that way? Why did our Council of elders turn so violently against him? What wrong did he do? Why didn't he use his powers? Why? Oh, why?

The questions churned round and round my mind. I was too stunned to weep. All I could do was watch as he breathed his last on that cruel instrument of death. Why, we couldn't even give him a proper burial because of the approaching Sabbath! What was the use of Sabbath when God had turned away his face as he did?

It was Sunday morning. It was still dark. I had to get there to be sure . . .! Peter and John were also there and to our dismay the tomb was open and there was no one around. In numb disbelief, I stared into that dark space as if somehow I could conjure up his body on the stone. Tears were running down my cheeks and I could feel myself grappling for some straw of hope. "What had happened here?" I thought!

[Mary crying – Jesus enters scene]

Then I saw the shadow of a man and heard a voice say, "Mary."

[Song: "Tears, Hopes, and Promises" (duet)]

I promised myself that I would never forget him! Will you remember my Jesus?

## Sample 22

The following worship was conducted at Mission College Church in 2001. The script requires a reader/narrator.

### *The Language of Heaven*

Throughout the pages of Holy Scripture, music serves as a principal form of communication. Every time God did something special, a song was sung. Job tells us that the sons of God sang at the creation of the world. Angels sang to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Again and again, musical celebration was the primary expression of divine presence. Angels sang around the throne of God. The Israelites sang on the shores of the Red Sea and at the dedication of the Temple. The longest book of the Bible is a songbook. More often than not, these songs spoke of the goodness of God.

Song: "God Is so Good" (congregation)

It is tempting to think that God's goodness is confined to the here and now. But we must question this premise. Is God good only because he can make our lives a little easier? The Bible maintains that God is good because he promises a better hereafter. As Jesus said: In my Father's house are many mansions. On this earth our best dwelling place might only be a cottage but there is a mansion over the hilltop for every believer.

Song: "Mansion over the hilltop" (congregation)

Because God promises to build a new world for us, we are assured that there will be new homes for everyone in his kingdom. Our homes on earth may be simple. We may not possess mansions to live in. We may not always like our earthly dwellings. In glory land we will all have homes whose splendour will surpass the brilliance of the sun.

Song: "Do Lord" (congregation)

In the Bible we encounter several different musical instruments. One of those instruments was the flute. There were single-reed as well as double-reed flutes. They were played by shepherds to entertain their flocks or lull them to sleep. They were used for social events. They were played at weddings and funerals. They were also utilised in worship services. Hear the sound of the flute.

Song: (recorder/flute piece)

A principal instrument in biblical times was the trumpet. There were two types of trumpets. The *shophar* or *yobel* was a ram's horn. They were used to announce the

Sabbath or the New Year and to commence worship services. There were also metal trumpets made of beaten silver that were used in battles and at special occasions, such as the dedication of the Temple. Hear the trumpet sound.

Song: (trumpet piece)

The first musical instrument mentioned in the Bible was the lyre. It was also the most common instrument. This was the instrument used by David, the shepherd, the “sweet singer” of Israel. This instrument was known as *kinnor* in Hebrew, *qithros* in Aramaic, and *kithara* in Greek. The lyre was the great great great grandfather of the modern guitar and the instrument of choice for God’s people in Revelation. Hear the lyre through its contemporary cousin.

Song: (guitar piece)

The most important way of celebrating God in Scripture was through the use of the human voice. Over and over we read of people, like Miriam, Deborah, and Mary, who sang to praise God. Several Psalms called the worshippers to sing a new song to the Lord. Time and time again we are told in Revelation that the redeemed of God will engage in singing. God’s people will sing of the glory of their new homeland, the holy city, the New Jerusalem.

Song: “Holy City” (solo)

In singing about the holy city, we are reminded that this world is really not our home. We are pilgrims on a journey to a far better place and we are simply passing through this world.

Song: “This World Is not my Home” (congregation)

According to Isa 35, God’s redeemed will enter Zion with singing and everlasting joy will be on their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, while sorrow and sighing will flee away. At that moment, they will have learned that the language of heaven will be, as it has always been, music, God’s primary form of speech.

Song: “Therefore the redeemed” (congregation)

### Sample 23

**Celebrate the Child: A Heavenly Rhapsody in Human Voice** was a Christmas Eve worship experience at St. Paul's UCC conducted on 24 December 1999. This worship was scripted.

#### Lighting the Candelabra & Prayer

##### Reading #1: *A Parable of Christmas*

Once there lived a king who had power over all nations and peoples. His courts were of the richest splendour; his tables were heavy with the finest food. Music and laughter and merriment floated from his castle. Clouds wrapped it in ethereal majesty. Peasants—in their valley of violence and despair—stopped and looked at the castle for a long while, wishing they might know the king. But none were able to reach it.

In the cold of winter, the king's tailor entered the royal chambers with the latest additions to the king's wardrobe. He had selected the finest materials and woven them into the most beautiful garments that eyes had ever seen.

But the king was not pleased. He ordered his tailor out, vowing to make his own clothes. The door to the throne room was shut and locked. Weeks passed. The royal court waited with anticipation to see what the king would make for himself. They knew they were bound to be blinded by the glory of it all. Finally the awaited day arrived. The door opened and the king appeared.

Everyone, especially the tailor, gasped in surprise. His majesty was dressed in the simplest, cheapest, most unkingly garments imaginable. He had the choice of the world's finest materials, but he had chosen to wear the clothes of a beggar. He spoke quietly to them all: "I am going into the valley!" (Michael Daves)

"Celebrate the Child" (congregation)

#### Night-Day Song

##### The Advent Candle

1<sup>st</sup> purple candle: We relight this candle of hope to remind us that Jesus Christ is our hope, bringing light into our darkness.

2<sup>nd</sup> purple candle: We relight this candle of peace to remind us that Jesus Christ brings light to guide us in our darkness.

3<sup>rd</sup> pink candle: We relight this candle of joy to remind us that God gives us the joy promised to us in the coming of Christ.

4<sup>th</sup> purple candle: We relight this candle of love to remind us that God sends light and the warmth of love into our darkness.

5<sup>th</sup> white candle: We light the centre advent candle, the Christ candle, to remind us who is at the centre of the Christmas story. O come, all ye faithful, rejoice on this night as God comes among us, the Christian's true light.

##### Reading #2: *Christmas Everywhere*

Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas tonight!  
Christmas in lands of the fir and pine,  
Christmas in the lands of the palm and vine,  
Christmas where snow peaks stand solemn and white,  
Christmas where cornfields stand sunny and bright,  
Christmas where children are hopeful and gay,  
Christmas where old men are patient and gray,  
Christmas where peace, like a dove in his flight,  
Broods o'er brave men in the thick of the fight;  
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas tonight!  
For the Christ child who comes is the Master of all;  
No palace too great, no cottage too small. (Phillips Brooks)

“O Holy Night” (solo)

“Silent Night” (solo & congregation)

“Cool Night, Quiet Night” (choir)

*Reading #3: His Love Reaching*

Right from the beginning God's love has reached, and from the beginning man has refused to understand. But love went on reaching, offering itself. Love offered the eternal . . . we wanted the immediate. Love offered deep joy . . . we wanted thrills. Love offered freedom . . . we wanted license. Love offered communion with God himself . . . we wanted to worship at the shrine of our own minds. Love offered peace . . . we wanted approval for our wars. Even yet, love went on reaching. And still today, after two thousand years, patiently, lovingly, Christ is reaching out to us today. Right through the chaos of our world, through the confusion of our minds. He is reaching . . . longing to share with us the very being of God. His love still is longing. His love still is reaching, right past the shackles of my mind. And the Word of the Father became Mary's little Son. And his love reached all the way to where I was. (Gloria Gaither)

“Saviour's Day” (solo)

Angel Song

*Reading #4: Listen for the Angels*

Angels have been found in unexpected places: speaking to Sarah's handmaiden, wrestling with Jacob, explaining the burning bush to Moses, feeding Elijah in the desert. They formed the first choir and sang of glory when our Lord was born. Listen and be alert; you wouldn't want to miss one! (Betty Hager)

“Hark the Herald Angels Sing” (congregation)

“Angels We Have Heard on High” (congregation)

Our Song

Reading #5: *A Love Song*

A great love song is a moment of ecstasy frozen into words, a rhapsody of enthusiasm and passion, a metaphor pointing to a moment when the poet was lifted outside of himself to see reality in its ideal form. It charms us with a memory of the ecstatic moment or allures us with the hint that such a moment might yet be possible. A love song is meant to seduce us from routine into a fantasised ideal of perfect love. God's love song is in many ways like other great love songs . . . This is our challenge, to find ways to bring the heavenly rhapsody down into our own worldly realities.

"O Come All Ye Faithful" (congregation)

"Sing a Glad Noel" (choir)

"Good Christians Now Rejoice" (congregation)

Sermonette: *Celebrate the Child*

"He Started the Whole World Singing" (congregation)

Offering

"Hallelujah Chorus" & Prayer



## Sample 24

**C.H.R.I.S.T.M.A.S.** was another Christmas Eve service conducted at St. Paul's UCC on 24 December 2000. This worship was scripted.

Prelude

Lighting the Candelabra

Prayer

"There's a Song in the Air" (congregation)

"O Come All Ye Faithful" (congregation)

### **C is for the Christ Child**

The Advent Candle

"What Child Is This?" (congregation)

*Storyteller*

There she was. The young woman with the radiant smile. She was leaning against one of the stalls, and the eyes in the happy face were closed. The man was at her side. And behind them, in the manger where the cows came for their food, was the baby.

He was a tiny thing, wrapped tightly in a long band and sleeping as soundly as any newborn baby. Sleeping as though the world had not waited thousands of years for this moment. As soundly as though your life and my life and the life of everyone on earth were not wrapped up in his birth. As though from this moment on all the sin and sorrow of the world were not his problem.

Should you speak to his mother resting so quietly there? Should you ask her if you might touch the Baby—not to wake him, but just to touch his hand? What a moment that would have been! To have reached out your own hand and touched the Son of God! (Ruth Bell Graham) This Son of God—the Christ of Christmas—did not appear unannounced. History is going somewhere, and from the beginning of creation, God had been saying to us that a special person was coming to earth for a special reason. God's promises regarding the coming of this Child were recorded long before he actually appeared. When God promises something, he keeps his word. Christmas began in the heart of God, but it is completed only when it reaches the heart of man.

"Holy Child" (choir)

### **H is for Herald Angels**

"Hark the Herald Angels Sing" (congregation)

*Storyteller*

From the very throne of heaven they were summoned. The Cherubim, the arch angels, the Seraphim . . . all of the heavenly hosts. For they were to witness an

extraordinary moment. Since the beginning of time, since eternity was established, this very day had been designed. “Prepare the way of the Lord, for the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

Angels have been found in unexpected places: speaking to Sarah’s handmaiden, wrestling with Jacob, explaining the burning bush to Moses, feeding Elijah in the desert. They formed the first choir and sang of glory when our Lord was born. Listen and be alert; you wouldn’t want to miss them! (Betty Hager)

“Angels We Have Heard on High” (congregation)

*Storyteller*

“Comfort, comfort my people,” says your God. “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour and the vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of despair. For I, the Holy One of Israel, am your Redeemer!

“I Know That My Redeemer Liveth” (solo)

**I is for Israel**

*Storyteller*

Israel means “one who has struggled with God and overcome.” Israel is the special name of God’s people throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament we meet a national, physical Israel. In the New Testament we encounter a spiritual Israel. The great promises of God were made to Israel; the providences of God were revealed to Israel; the awesome power of God was manifested on Israel’s behalf. The birth of the Messiah was simply the fulfilment of centuries of dreams and anticipation. The Messiah, the anointed one, the Christ was born to and for Israel. Yet, through Israel God intended to bring about the streaming of the nations to Mount Zion, to the House of the Lord. That intention still holds true for spiritual Israel. Christmas is a reminder that the Christ who was born as a baby commissions us to gather the peoples to Zion, to the ultimate Israel.

**S is for the Star**

“Every Star Shall Sing a Carol” (handbell choir)

*Storyteller*

Back during World War II a little boy and his daddy were driving home on Christmas Eve. They drove past rows of houses with Christmas trees and decorations in the windows. In many of the windows the little boy noticed a star. He asked his father, "Daddy, why do some of the people have a star in the window?" His daddy said that the star meant that the family had a son in the war. As they passed the last house, suddenly the little boy caught sight of the evening star in the sky. "Look, Daddy, God must have a son in the war too! He's got a star in the window." Indeed, God has a son who went to war but Jesus came into our world to go to war with sin.

"The Star Carol" (congregation)

**T is for Three Wise Men**

"We Three Kings" (congregation)

*Storyteller*

They did what wise men still do,  
They did what wise men still do.  
They followed the light that would lead them to you,  
They fell down before you to praise and adore you.  
They did what wise men still do.

They found what seekers still find,  
They found what seekers still find.  
The beautiful plan that the Father designed,  
The Child given to us was born to live through us.  
They found what seekers still find.

For all of us are seekers, and all of us are lost,  
On the waves of the world we've been battered and tossed.  
And we come to the cradle that leads to the cross,  
Just as they came to you, just as they came back then.  
We do what wise men still do,  
We do what wise men still do.  
We follow the light that has led to you  
We fall down before you to praise and adore you.  
We do what wise men still do.

**M is for the Manger**

"Away in a Manger" (congregation)

*Storyteller*

There was nothing sacred about that manger in Bethlehem. Jesus could have been born in the best hotel room in the city . . . if it had been left open for him. But . . . he wasn't pushy. He still isn't. He moves only in the places we vacate for him. There was room that night only in the stable. So that's where he was born. He could have been born in a castle or a palace, but instead this King of kings was born in a stable with animals made weary by travel. In this setting he chose to demonstrate the love of the Father. By his humble birth, he transformed a dingy stable into something filled with grace. In the midst of the old and musty, something new and fresh with life was born. As he entered the world that night long ago, so he longs to enter our lives today; transforming the plain into something magnificent, the old into something new, the dying into that which throbs with life. In the midst of overwhelming trials and everyday stresses, he wants to lift us up and make us strong. Why did he come? He came that we might have life—complete and satisfying. His method: Not to change our external surroundings, but to change us from within. (Gloria Gaither)

“Child in the Manger” (congregation)

### **A is for All He Stands for**

#### *Storyteller*

Billions of people were scattered on a great plain before God's throne. Some of the groups near the front talked heatedly—not with cringing shame, but with belligerence. “How can God judge us,” said one. “What does he know about suffering?” snapped a brunette. She jerked back a sleeve to reveal a tattooed number from a Nazi concentration camp. “We endured terror, beatings, torture, death!” In another group a black man lowered his collar. “What about this?” he demanded, showing an ugly rope burn. “Lynched for no crime but being black! We have suffocated in ships, been wrenched from loved ones, toiled till death gave release.” Far out across the plain were hundreds of such groups. Each had a complaint against God for the evil and suffering he permitted in his world. How lucky God was to live in heaven where there was no weeping, no fear, no hunger, no hatred! Indeed, what did God know about what man had been forced to endure in this world. “After all, God leads a pretty sheltered life,” they said.

So each group sent a leader, chosen because he had suffered the most. There was a Jew, a black, an untouchable from India, an illegitimate, a person from Hiroshima, and one from a Siberian slave camp. In the centre of the plain they consulted with each other. At last they were ready to present their case. It was rather simple: before God would be qualified to be their judge, he must endure what they had endured. Their decision was that God should be sentenced to live on earth—as a man!

But because he was God, they set certain safeguards to be sure he could not use his divine powers to help himself: Let him be born a Jew. Let the legitimacy of his

birth be doubted, so that none would know who is really his father. Let him champion a cause so just, but so radical, that it brings down upon him the hate, condemnation, and efforts of every major traditional and established religious authority to eliminate him. Let him try to describe what no man had ever seen, tasted, or smelled—let him try to communicate God to men. Let him be betrayed by his dearest friends. Let him be indicted on false charges, tried before a prejudiced jury, and convicted by a cowardly judge. Let him see what it is to be terribly alone and completely abandoned by every living thing. Let him be tortured and let him die! Let him die the most humiliating death—with common thieves.

As each leader announced his portion of the sentence, loud murmurs of approval went up from the great throngs of people. But when the last had finished pronouncing sentence, there was a long silence. No one uttered another word. No one moved. For suddenly all knew . . . God had already served his sentence. Through Jesus, God had indeed become all things to all people.

“All My Heart Rejoices” (congregation)

### **S is for Shepherds**

“While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks” (congregation)

#### *Storyteller*

And when the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing which the Lord has told us.”

The shepherds ran the darkened path to Bethlehem

To see the Child, to meet the King.

Imagining a royal scene would welcome them;

Would there be songs of praise and worship, gifts and offerings?

A regal hall alive with celebration

To greet the Child, to hail the King.

A banquet feast, a festive jubilation;

Would there be music filled with praise, and would the angels sing?

This is the way a mighty King is born,

This is the way to welcome royalty.

An earthly celebration for His coronation day,

The trumpet sound a regal fanfare;

This is the way.

A modest manger bed is where the shepherds found the Holy Child, the King of kings.

His presence turned the stable into holy ground.

But this was not the royal scene they were imagining.

They knelt before God’s Holy gift, the Saviour’s birth, this was the Child, this was the King.

From heaven's throne, God's only Son had come to earth,  
Let all creation raise the song and with the angels sing,  
This is the way a mighty King is born,  
This is the way to welcome royalty.  
Yes, this is God's way that a mighty King is born,  
This is God's way to welcome royalty.  
A heavenly celebration for His coronation day,  
The angels sound a regal fanfare,  
This is the way, this is God's way.

"CHRISTMAS" (sermonette)  
Offering and Lighting of Candles  
"Christmas Medley" (handbell choir)

*Storyteller*

To a dark world, light came; and Mary and Joseph were the first to see the tiny light lying in a manger. Yet the light was bright enough to draw shepherds from the darkness of their fields to come and worship him. And the light grew and lived among men. Long before God made the world, he chose us to be his very own, through what Christ would do for us. Man sat in the darkness of selfish unbelief and deception; so God sent his Son as a child to grow and live among us. Of his own coming, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." His infinite character is light and by believing in him our sins are replaced by his character and our lives are filled with the light of his life.

Prayer (leader & congregation)

Lord, I thank you for Christmas, but most of all I am so thankful for Jesus. May I never think of you only at Christmastime, but try to see you in every detail of my life. May I confer with you on everything I do. And whether I'm hurt or blest, up or down, may my ears always be open to what you are saying. May I never be overwhelmed with the tragedies of life that I forget that you are in control, and that you do know what's best for me. Lord, I never could have prayed this prayer before, but you are the centre of my life right now and it's there you changed my attitude. And, Father I really mean: I want to love you, Lord, I want to serve you, Lord, I want to please you, Lord; this is my prayer. Amen.

Postlude

## Sample 25

The following liturgy was designed for Mission College Church and utilised the format of Synagogue worship. The emphasis of the worship was on the church's *esprit de corps* and the stated theme was *Yahad* or Unity. The worship was held on 31 August 2002.

### I. Shharith

**Zemirot** (*Qahal* [congregation] remains seated while singing)

#### *Shalom Haverim*

Shalom haverim, shalom haverim, shalom, shalom.  
Shabbat shalom, Shabbat shalom, shalom, shalom.  
Shalom my friends, shalom my friends, shalom, shalom.  
Shabbat shalom, Shabbat shalom, shalom, shalom.

#### *Hinneh Mah Tov* (Ps 133:1)

Hinneh mah tov umanaim; Shevet ahim gam yahad  
Hinneh mah tov umanaim; Shevet ahim gam yahad

Hinneh mah tov shevet ahim gam yahad  
Hinneh mah tov shevet ahim gam yahad

#### *Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee* (AH 12)

#### *The Church's One Foundation* (AH 348)

#### *Sing a New Song* (AH 33)

**Reading of Psalm 93:** *Adonai Malak* (The Lord Reigns)

**Shema Israel** (*Qahal* [congregation] stands when choir starts reciting the *Shema*.)  
*Qahal* with *Hazan* join the choir as they repeat:

“Shema, Israel: Adonai Eloheynu, Adonai Ahad!”

(Translation: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Deut 6:4)

#### **Amida:** *Hazan*

*Qahal* (congregation) remains standing and faces toward Jerusalem.

*Hazan:* Baruk atah Adonai, Eloheynu we-elohey avoteynu  
Elohey Avraham, Elohey Yzhaq we-elohey Yaaqob.

All read silently:

Praised are you Lord, our God, and God of our fathers and mothers,

God of Abraham and Sarah, God of Isaac and Rebecca, and God of Jacob and Rachel; the great God, the mighty and revered God, the God of above.  
You are the provider of grace and Creator of everything.  
You remember our fathers and our mothers and their love for you.  
And therefore, you will bring the Redeemer (the *Goel*) to their children's children, because of your name and because of your love.  
You Lord, are mighty forever, you Lord will raise the dead;  
You are powerful enough to save.

*Hazan*: (loud prayer with petition)

*Hazan*: We shall sanctify your name in this world, as the holy congregation of the seraphim sanctify you in their mysterious language, as it is written: "And one cried to another and said":

*Qahal*: *Qadosh, qadosh, qadosh*  
Holy, holy, holy the Lord of hosts.  
The whole earth is full of his glory.

*Hazan*: Uniting their voices, they praise and say:

*Qahal*: Barukh kavod Adonai  
Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his heavenly place

*Hazan*: In the Holy Scripture it is written:

*Qahal*: The Lord shall reign forever—your God, O Zion, to all generation. Halleluya (Ps 146:10)

*Hazan and Qahal*

You are *qadosh*; you are holy.  
Your name is *qadosh*; your name is holy.  
And we will say *halleluyah*; we will praise you.  
Barukh atah Adonai, the Holy God, the *qadosh*.

All Sing: *Be Thou My Vision* (AH 547)

*Qahal* is seated.

## II. Qeriat Torah

**Presentation of the Torah:** *Hazan*

*Hazan*: So it was, whenever the ark set out, that Moses said:



*Qahal*: “Rise up, O Lord! Let your enemies be scattered and let those who hate you flee from you.”

*Hazan* takes the *Torah* and says:

Shema Israel, Adonai Eloheynu Adonai ahad.

### **Passing the Torah**

*Qahal* stands and sings *Give Me the Bible* (AH 272) while the *Torah* is passed. When the *Torah* returns to the podium, the *Qahal* is seated.

### **Blessing: Hazan**

Barukh et Adonai hamevorakh le olam vaed.

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheynu melekh ha-olam.

(Translation: Bless the Lord, the Blessed One, forever.

Blessed are you Lord, our God, King of the Universe.)

### **Reading of Deut 32:1-4**

**Blessing:** Barukh atah Adonai eloheynu melekh olam.

Barukh atah Adonai asher natan lanu Torat emet.

(Translation: Blessed are you Lord, our God, King of the universe. Blessed are you Lord who has given us the true *Torah*.)

### **Reading of Psalm 133**

**Blessing:** Barukh atah Adonai melekh ha-olam

Barukh atah Adonai asher bahar beneviim tovim

(Translation: Blessed are you Lord, our God, King of the universe. Blessed are you Lord who has chosen good prophets.)

### **Reading of Acts 2:42-47**

**Blessing:** Barukh atah Adonai Eloheynu melekh ha-olam

Barukh atah Adonai Elohim meqadesh hashabbat.

(Translation: Blessed are you Lord, our God, king of the universe. Blessed are you Lord God who sanctified the Sabbath.)

**Derashah:** “Esprit de corps” (sermon)

**Barukh Hashem:** “Blessed be the name of the Lord”

(The deacons will collect the tithes and offerings)

### III. Musaf

*Qahal* stands

**Liturgical Reading of Rev 4:8, 11:** *Hazan*

*Hazan:* Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty  
Qadosh, qadosh, qadosh, Adonai El Shaddai

*Qahal:* Who was, and is, and is to come.

*Hazan:* You are worthy, O Lord Adonai,  
To receive glory and honour and power.

*Qahal:* For you created all things, and by your will they exist and  
were created.

*Qahal* and *Hazan:*

Fear God and give glory to him, for the hour of judgement  
has come; and worship him who made the heaven and  
earth, the sea and the springs of water. (Rev 14:7)

*Hazan:* Aleinu lesabeiah le adon ha-kol  
Lateit gdulah leytser bereisheet.  
It is for us to praise the Lord of all,  
To proclaim the greatness of the Creator of the universe.

**All Kneel Down:** *Hazan* and *Qahal*

We kneel down and prostrate before the King of kings.  
Haqadosh barukh hu,  
The Holy One, blessed be he. We worship you!

**All Pray Silently**

*Hazan:* He stretched forth the heavens and laid the  
foundations of the earth. He is our God; there is none  
else. We therefore hope in you Lord our God. That we  
may very soon behold the glory of your might.

**Prayer**

**Adon Olam:** *Hazan* and *Qahal*

Lord of the world who was King,  
Even when nothing was yet created.  
When by his will all things were made,  
Then he was called a King.

And even when all things will cease,  
He still alone will reign in majesty.  
He was, he is,  
And he will be in glory.  
He is unique and there is not another God,  
No other can compare to him or consort with him;  
Without beginning and without end,  
To him the power and the dominion.

He is my God, my living *Goel*,  
My rock in time of trouble and misery.  
He is my banner and my refuge;  
He is my answer when I cry.

I will entrust my life in his hand.  
When I will fall asleep and when I will wake up.  
Both physically and spiritually,  
*Adonai*, the Lord is with me, I will not fear.

### **Priestly Benediction**

#### **Hevenu Shalom Aleikhem** (*Qahal* sings)

Hevenu shalom aleikhem  
Hevenu shalom aleikhem  
Hevenu shalom aleikhem  
Hevenu shalom, shalom, shalom aleikhem.  
(Translation: We brought you peace)

*Qahal* exits for *Kiddush* (refreshment and fellowship).

## **Sample 26**

This next service was developed for a Sabbath sundown worship by the Mission College faculty and staff. The worship was conducted on 13 December 2003.

### **A Prayer for Worship** (leader)

Eternal God, from whom streams every impulse that is beautiful and true, help us in this hour of worship to take grateful inventory of what sustains us: the friendships, the shared goals, the intimate labours that lace life with meaning.

We thank you for music, and for everything that elevates our spirits above the smoggy confusions of our time and gives us hope. Remind us that to every gift is attached a responsibility, to every privilege an obligation.

Therefore, make it our purpose, as it is yours throughout the universe, to bring creativity rather than chaos, harmony rather than discord, talent and appreciation rather than cynicism and apathy. Arrange our sympathies into your symphony, O Lord, in whom we trust, and in whose grace we are never confounded. Amen. (Philip Anderson)

### **Praising our God** (people)

“How Great Thou Art”

“My Maker and My King”

### **A Prayer of Thanksgiving** (leader & people)

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all people.

We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your incomparable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may make known your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (*Book of Common Prayer*)

### **Praising Our Saviour** (people) “Fairest Lord Jesus”

### **To Whom Our Praise Is Due** (leader & people)

Praise the Lord for sunshine,

Praise the Lord for rain,

Praise the Lord for pleasure,

Praise the Lord for pain,

Praise the Lord for lessons learned

Through every joy and sorrow,

Praise the Lord for days gone by,

And for each new tomorrow! (Alice Joyce Davidison)

### **He Is Our Strength**

Leader: Walk with God; walk before God; walk in fellowship with God. It is that ordinary everyday walk which will be attacked. And yet we need never crash. We have two glorious words with which to confront the adversary: But God.

People: We are all weakness, but God is the strength of my heart.

Leader: Before the command was given to Abram he was told that wonderful name of the Lord. I am El Shaddai, the Almighty God, the God who is enough.

People: He is our eternal strength, and with him we can walk this day and every day of our lives. (Amy Carmichael)

### **Loving Our Neighbour** (leader & people)

Jesus, you know what it is to be human and that it is not easy to love our neighbours as ourselves. When we do not understand our neighbour, nor they us, help us to think more about how we could understand them and less about how they could understand us. May we never let fear keep us from speaking or acting in love, nor thoughtlessness spoil the impulse of the heart. May we do all that we do in gratitude to You, rather than in desire for praise, and when our time, energy or talent are at an end, may we quietly ask Your help and remember that You love and care for them much more than we do. (Avery Brooke)

### **Fellowship Supper** (people)

### **Fellowship Toast** (leader & people)

### **A Gaelic Blessing**

Leader: Deep peace of the running wave to you,

People: Deep peace of the flowing air to you,

Leader: Deep peace of the quiet earth to you,

People: Deep peace of the shining stars to you,

Leader: Deep peace of the gentle night to you,

People: Moon and stars pour their healing light on you;

Leader: Deep peace of Christ, the light of the world, to you;

People: Deep peace of Christ to you.

## Sample 27

This worship was built around the song “Friend” and was conducted by the youth of SAUC Church. The worship was entitled “Friends Forever.”

### FRIENDS FOREVER

Opening Prayer

“Friends” (instrumental/congregation)

“As the Deer” (congregation)

#### Narration:

We all desire to have friends. Yet human friendship has limits. Even the very best friends can become enemies. Trust can be lost; confidence can be betrayed; feelings can be hurt. There is within each of us a longing—a longing for a more permanent friendship. Such a friend is JESUS!

“What a Friend We Have in Jesus” (congregation)

#### Narration:

I am writing to say how much I care for you and to say how much I want you to know me better. When you awoke this morning I exploded a brilliant sunrise through your window hoping to get your attention. But you rushed off without even noticing. Later, I noticed you were walking with some friends, so I bathed you in warm sunshine and perfumed the air with nature’s sweet scent, and still you didn’t notice me. As you passed by I shouted to you in a thunderstorm and painted a beautiful rainbow in the sky and you didn’t even look. In the evening, I spilled moonlight onto your face and sent a cool breeze to rest you. As you slept, I watched over you and shared your thoughts, but you were unaware that I was so near. I have chosen you and hope you will talk to me soon. Until then I will remain near. I am your friend and love you very much.  
Your friend, Jesus!

To know this friend, all you have to do is reach out to him!

“Reach Out to Jesus” (trio)

#### Narration:

To some, Jesus is the God of the universe. To others, he is a babe in a manger. Some see him as a carpenter or a warrior or a great teacher. But the only thing he really wants is to be your friend!

To bring help where there is none,  
To bring laughter in the rain,  
To be sunshine in the night,

And to gently ease the pain.

“Friends” (congregation)

“My God and I” (congregation)

**Narration:**

The best thing about Jesus is that he is a friend who is always with us even when it does not seem like it.

One night a man had a dream. He was walking along the beach with the Lord and across the sky flashed scenes from his life. In each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one made by him, and the other by the Lord. When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the worst times in his life.

This bothered him very much, so he asked the Lord about it. “Lord, you said that once I decided to follow you, you’d walk with me all the way. But I’ve noticed that during times of trouble, there is only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why you left me when I needed you the most.” The Lord answered, “My precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial, when you see only one set of footprints, that’s when I was carrying you.”

This is why Jesus means everything to us!

“He Is Everything to Me” (congregation)

**Narration:**

As a friend, Jesus can also reach our friends. He can touch where we never can; he can heal where we never will; he can comfort when we are unable to. He can reach your friend!

“Can You Reach My Friend?” (duet)

**Narration:**

Our prayer to Jesus should be:

I love you not for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you. I love you not only for what you have made of yourself, but for what you are making of me. I love you because you have done more than any creed could have done to make me good, and more than any fate could have done to make me happy. You have done it without a touch, without a word, without a sign. You have done it by being my FRIEND.

Would you like Jesus to be your friend?

“O Friends Do You Love Jesus?” (congregation)

“Friends” (congregation)

Prayer

## Sample 28

**Through Joseph's Eyes: An Extraordinary Plan Through an Ordinary Man.** This worship is dramatised monologue and is conducted acapella. The worship reflects upon the experience of Joseph who was selected to become the human father of Jesus. The worship was conducted at MC Church on 17 July 2004.

The worship requires 4 scenes:

- (1) Joseph and Mary bringing 12 year old Jesus to Jerusalem for the Passover,
- (2) Joseph in bed when an angel visits him,
- (3) The Magi visit the baby Jesus and his family
- (4) Jesus conversing with the scribes.

Prayer: by the Reader.

[High Priest, Levites, and Scribes take their place at the Temple.]

**Narration:** My name is Yosef. My story is quite unique as I am certain you will discover. But let me begin with that fateful day. My son, Yeshua, had reached the age of 12. Now he was ready to travel with us. My wife, Miriam, and I decided it was time to take him to Yerushalayim for the great Passover, the Peshach. We set out from Nazareth along with many other pilgrims.

[Pilgrims proceed from rear of the Church towards the Temple area]

**Narration:** After about a week on the road, we finally arrived at Yerushalayim and headed straight for the Temple. What a magnificent sight that was! There at the top of the Temple stairs stood the High Priest, resplendent in his gorgeous robes. He was inviting us to give our gifts to Yahweh.

[High Priest invites congregation to deposit offerings at the Temple gate.]

**Narration:** All around the Temple precinct stood the Levites and they led us in a litany of praises to our God Almighty.

[Levites lead the praises of Israel. Sing: "Majesty," "Gloria," "Hinneh ma-tov," "Hodu," and "Above All." ]

**Narration:** Before I go any further, let me take you back to the beginning of all this.

[Joseph takes his place at the bedroom scene. Pilgrims remain at the Temple. Jesus proceeds to the scene with the scribes.]

**Narration:** I was having a very sleepless night. My fiancée had just told me that she was pregnant. I knew I was not the father. More frightening was the story she had



concocted. She claimed that God had gotten her pregnant. Now, I love Miriam very much. But how can I believe such a story? I could not sleep! As I tossed around in bed my room was suddenly filled with an eerie light and there next to my bed stood an angel.

[Angel appears at Joseph's bedside.]

**Narration:** I was terrified. But the angel spoke to me: "Yosef, do not be afraid. Take Miriam as your wife because the child in her is truly from God. This child will save many people from sin and you should call him the name Yeshua."

[Angel leaves.]

**Narration:** I did not dare to disobey such a vision. I hastily married Miriam the very next day. And as the angel had said, we had a son.  
[Joseph and Mary proceed to the manger scene.]

**Narration:** My son, Yeshua, was born in a most inauspicious manner. We were compelled by imperial decree to go down to Bethlehem for census taking. Miriam was heavy with child and the trip was hard on her. When we reached Bethlehem Miriam told me it was time. I desperately tried to find some accommodation but the only place available was a shepherd's stable.

[Magis proceed from the back of the Church to the manger scene]

**Narration:** We had only been there for a few days when something, which left me absolutely speechless, happened. To Miriam and my dismay, one evening a group of very important-looking foreigners came to our humble stable. You could tell they were rich. I was horrified when they knelt down before my little son, Yeshua, and began to worship him. They said that they had been led there by a star, and that this little boy was the new king of Israel. I could hardly believe my ears! How can this really be? I wondered what Miriam was thinking!

[Joseph sings "Mary Did You Know?"]

[Magis exit the scene. Joseph and Mary return to the temple scene]

**Narration:** That was 12 years ago. This is now! Our first family Passover was over and we set out for home.

[Pilgrims, including Joseph and Mary, exit the scene.]

**Narration:** Halfway through our journey Miriam and I discovered that Yeshua was missing. I almost died. I had lost God's son. How can I ever live with myself? We quickly hurried back to Yerushalayim.

[Joseph and Miriam hurry to Jerusalem and come to the Temple to the area with the scribes.]

**Narration:** I was aghast when I saw Yeshua in the midst of this very august audience. What did a 12 year old boy have in common with such learned men? My mind was swimming and I barely heard Miriam blurt out, "Son, why have you treated us this way?"

His answer shocked and puzzled me. "Mother, don't you know that I must be about my Father's business?"

My Father's business? I knew that he was not speaking about me! What was his Father's business? How am I involved in that business? Or am I just a player in this drama?

[Short homily about God's extraordinary plan fulfilled through an ordinary man]

Prayer: by the High Priest

## Sample 29

**Isaiah's Song** was a worship experience based entirely on the Book of Isaiah. The worship format is simple and requires no sermon since the idea is to allow a particular biblical text to speak for itself. The worship was held at MC Church on 4 December 2004. The liturgy includes the lyrics of the songs, which are based on Isaiah texts. This worship also requires the use of video footage for certain segments.

Prayer

Introducing Isaiah

Isa 5:1-7: The Song of the Vineyard – recitation  
Offering

Isa 6:1-8: The Song of the Seraphs – recitation  
“Holy Lord” (congregation)

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might  
Heaven and earth of your glory are full  
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest  
(repeat)*

*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord (2x)*

*Holy, holy, holy Lord . . .*

Isa 9:2-7: The Song of the Redeemer – recitation  
“For unto us a Child is born” (from *Messiah* – video #1)

Isa 35:1-10: The Song of the Redeemed – recitation  
“Therefore the Redeemed” (congregation)

*Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return  
And come with singing unto Zion  
And everlasting joy shall be upon their heads  
(repeat)*

*They shall obtain gladness and joy  
And sorrow and mourning shall flee away*

*Therefore the redeemed . . .*

Isa 40:1-5: The Song of Comfort – recitation

“Comfort Ye, my people” (from *Messiah* – video #2)

Isa 40:25-31: The Song of the Eagle – recitation

“Wings of an Eagle” (congregation)

*As we hope in the Lord, we will gain our strength  
We will run for miles, we will stand up straight  
We will not grow weary, we will not grow faint  
On the wings of an eagle we will rise  
(repeat)*

*On the wings of an eagle we will rise  
On the wings of an eagle we will rise  
For our hope is found in the power of God  
On the wings of an eagle we will rise (2x)*

*For the Lord who is God calls his people home  
Not to be afraid as we journey the road  
Hand in hand we'll be walking with the Lord our God  
On the wings of an eagle we will rise  
As we hope in the Lord, we will gain our strength  
We will run for miles, we will stand up straight  
We will not grow weary, we will not grow faint  
On the wings of an eagle we will rise*

*On the wings . . .*

Isa 43:1-7: The Song of the Creator – recitation

“Punchinello’s Discovery” (story)

Isa 55:1-13: The Song of the Joyous – recitation

“The Trees of the Field” (congregation)

*You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace  
The mountains and the hills will break forth before you  
There'll be shouts for joy and all the trees of the field  
Will clap, will clap their hands*

*And all the trees of the field will clap their hands  
The trees of the field will clap their hands  
The trees of the field will clap their hands  
While you go out with joy*

Isa 60:1-3: The Song of Zion – recitation

“Qumi ’ori” (Hebrew song – congregation)

*Qumi ori ki va orek ukh vod adonai alayik sarak*

*Qumi ori ki va orek ukh vod adonai alayik sarak*

Isa 65:17-25: The Song of New Heaven and New Earth – recitation

Benediction

**Sample 30**

## CHAPTER 8

### *CREATIVE WORSHIP IDEAS*

In this chapter I would like to share ideas for worship experiences that relate directly to smaller settings such as the family and small groups. These ideas, like the worship liturgies in the previous chapter, have all been field-tested. The ideas also demonstrate different ways for using praise and Scripture and various types of prayer experiences.

#### Participative Bible Reading

This is a rather simple but effective idea. It can be employed in family worships, small group meetings, and even in the Church worship service. Select a passage of the Bible and assign different people to read certain portions of the passage. With the Psalms responsive reading, antiphonal reading, or even chant could be employed. For non-narrative Scripture such as law, history, wisdom, or the epistles, assign readers by verses.

For stories, one person could read the narrator's portion while others read the voices of characters within the story. For instance, if the story of Esther is selected, readers could be chosen for Esther, Mordecai, Haman, King Xerxes, and other characters. In this way everyone in the group can be involved. I would suggest that the reading be read with a sense of the dramatic elements present in the text.

#### Bible Re-enactments

Another way to deal with Scripture is through Bible re-enactments. Like the previous idea, different people should be assigned for the different voices in the passage. However, instead of simply reading their parts, the readers should dramatise their reading appropriately. This will enable them to sense the dramatic elements in the passage. A variation of this is to have one person read while the others mime the dramatic elements. Obviously this method works best with stories but it can be used creatively for other portions of Scripture. This idea can be used both in smaller settings like family worship and for the Church worship.

#### Topical Praise

A frequently neglected part of worship is praise. In most worship settings, praise is carried out rather haphazardly with no forethought or planning. Sometimes it appears that worship leaders, whether in the family, small groups, or Church, think that praise is simply about selecting a number of songs and then singing them. However, effective worship demands that praise be made more intentional. The easiest way to do this is through topical praise.

Select a theme or topic for the worship and then choose songs or hymns that directly inform that theme. In the less formal setting of the home or small group songs could be solicited from everyone in the group. For this to work the topic

should be adhered to carefully. Doing this compels worshippers to think about their praise and allows for greater diversity of songs. A variation of this idea is to have people choose songs which actually contain one particular word, for example songs that carry the word 'love'.

### Designed Prayers

Prayer experience in most worship settings tends to be formulaic. Someone is asked to offer an opening and a closing prayer. The prayer person drones a few lines or sentences and every one, in rote-like manner, echo a closing 'Amen'. Most people actually think this is prayer.

There are two concepts of prayer that I find most appealing. The first concept comes from Ellen White who suggests that prayer is about talking to God as to a friend. I believe that if this suggestion is taken seriously formulas play no part in prayer. The second suggestion comes from John Piper in *Let the Nations Be Glad!* He proposes that prayer is a wartime walkie-talkie that Christians should use to call home base for assistance. Again this implies a sense of urgency that leaves little room for formulas and imposes instead a more informal structure to prayer. Below are some ideas for enhancing the prayer life of the family and the Church.

### Prayer at Meals

Mealtime prayers are arguably the most formulaic of all prayers. While some of this formula approach can be utilised, I suggest varying it with other possibilities. Instead of everyone bowing and someone repeating a formula, a group thanksgiving could be used. In such a prayer everyone says a word of thanks to God. It is also possible to simply say a 'Hallelujah' at the start of the meal, or, instead of praying at the beginning of a meal reserve the grace for the end of the meal. That way the thanks are for a completed blessing.

### Five Finger Prayer

This is a prayer where everyone expresses specific thoughts in their prayers, guided by the fingers in their hand. The thumb represents those who are closest to you; the index finger stands for teachers and pastors; the middle finger, being the tallest, represents people in authority; the third finger, as the weakest finger in the hand, stands for people who are sick or the less fortunate in society; and the small finger represents those who are younger in age. As people pray, ask them to follow this hand pattern and to pray for all these categories of people. This kind of praying is more intentional and less formulaic.

### Sanctuary Prayer

To do this prayer a picture or sketch of the sanctuary is necessary. A prayer 'tour guide' is also essential. The tour guide takes the prayer group through the various sections of the sanctuary beginning with the courtyard and ending with the Holy of Holies. In each sector, the guide explains the specific article involved and then



invites people to pray using that object as the basis for their prayers. The prayer could follow this pattern:

Guide: “We are now at the courtyard of the Sanctuary. In front of us is the altar of burnt offerings. All the sacrifices brought to God were burned at this altar. I now invite you to pray . . .”

The number of people praying is at the sole discretion of the tour guide. When the entire sanctuary has been visited, the guide then closes with a prayer of his own. This prayer requires time and must not be rushed.

#### The Object-driven Prayer

At the start of this prayer have all the members pick an object from their person or belonging to them (a key, a wallet, a book, etc.). Tell them to hold this object in their hand and to pray using that object as the guide for their thoughts. If a person is holding a key he/she may want to talk to God about what that key represents and what he/she can learn from that. This prayer works best when people have their eyes opened and totally focus on the selected object.

#### The Empty Seat Prayer

This is one of the most potent forms of prayer and it can be used in any small group setting. Have all the members of the group/family seated in a circle but keep one empty spot/chair. Tell them that they should imagine God sitting in that empty slot. Without closing eyes or employing formulas, encourage the group members to talk to God. They should concentrate on the empty seat and talk to God as if he was actually present. They can say anything they like or ask any question. When everyone has had an opportunity to talk to God the prayer is over. Do not begin or end the prayer in the usual way.

I hope that some of the suggestions in this book resonate in the experiences of the readers and bless their walk with God.

## **GLOSSARY**

*Anamnesis* (a recalling to mind) A prayer in the sacred liturgy which fulfils Christ's command to recall.

*Canon* A member of a cathedral or collegiate chapter or a liturgical book.

*Celebrant* A worshipper who celebrates or a worship leader who leads out in celebration especially of the Eucharist.

*Collect* A prayer of the Church which begins with the priest saying, "Let us pray." The prayer ends with a formula to which the congregation replies "Amen."

*Epiclesis* A prayer to the Holy Spirit in which the Church expresses its conviction of faith in the work of the Holy Spirit.

*Eschatology* Traditionally defined as the doctrine of the "last things," in relation to human individuals (comprising death, resurrection, judgement, and the afterlife) or to the world.

*Eucharist* Another name for the Lord's Supper.

*Fraction* The breaking of the sacred host (the bread) at the Eucharist.

*Gradual* A chant based upon the Epistles.

*Guild* A professional association, such as a guild of musicians.

*Holler* Open vocal music made by African slaves in America, forming part of the complex web of music forming black spirituals.

*Hymnody* The study of the history and form of hymns.

*Kyrie* A type of intercessory prayer in the form of a litany.

*Lectio* A liturgical lesson.

*Lent* A forty-day period of penitence and prayer which begins on Ash Wednesday and prepares for the feast of Easter.

*Litany* A form of responsive prayer with the congregation responding to the liturgist's words.

*Liturgy* Originally a public office or duty from the Greek leitourgos meaning public servant. The word has since come to mean a form of public worship.

*Mass* The name given by the Roman Catholic Church to the most important form of Christian liturgy, otherwise known as Communion, the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper or the Divine Liturgy. Low Mass indicates a liturgical celebration with little ceremony (it may be without music); High Mass is very ceremonial and ornate.

*Monophony* Music consisting of a single melody.

*Oratorio* An Italian word meaning "prayer hall." Musical items sung in such buildings to illustrate or to comment on biblical stories became known as oratorios.

*Polyphony* (literally "many sounding") Music made by combining melodies.

*Sursum corda* (lift up your hearts) A short recitation by the celebrant as a forward to the Eucharistic prayer.

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