## *What would worship look like if…*

Someone asked me recently what I was looking for in worship— *what I long to see*— as a worship leader. What a difficult question. My mind raced over all kinds of potential answers; I wanted to reply with something scholarly and theologically profound. In the end, my answer wasn't especially deep, but it was heart-felt: "I just want to be with folks who really want to worship," I said. After a pause, I heard a deep sigh on the other end of the telephone. "Me, too," he breathed. "Me, too." Many of us are thirsty. *What about you?*

What would worship look like if people from all over Knoxville— from all walks of life, from many races, from disparate denominations— came together for worship? What would happen if that worship was God-directed, Christ-centered, and Holy Spirit-inspired, and that the only measure taken of its success be whether or not God was pleased with what He saw? And what would the worship look like if it was based upon and grounded in a thoroughly Biblical theology, but not necessarily denominationally specific, structure?

*I believe that the road to the future runs through the past.* The modern world did some damage to matters of faith and worship. As its influences now recede, I'm excited and energized by the worship renewal occurring in our land. So many believers, especially millennial kids, are finding refreshment at the deep well of classic Christianity and the ancient church and I'm convinced that many of the postmodern world's thirsts can be marvelously and even uniquely quenched there. There are rich treasures to be found in the liturgy, practice, and pattern of the ancient church and I'm delighted to see congregations and leaders revisiting the foundational elements of classic Christianity. I believe that returning to these foundational elements will be crucial as we make the shift from the modern to the postmodern world. "Ancient-Future Faith"– convergent faith— will be responsible for a great refreshing of worship and a key to helping connect with the postmodern person.

So, I envision a citywide worship that would be convergent: worship that would meaningfully use classic Christian language and patterns, but with a truly contemporary flair. This worship would hold to a basic, "Apostle's Creed" kind of theology, would affirm orthodox beliefs, and would acknowledge and celebrate God's saving acts and deeds throughout history. It would hold to the doctrine of the Trinity, the dual nature of Christ, embrace the cross, affirm that the inspired word of God, the Bible, is the authoritative, true record of the divine revelation of God, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, and would proclaim that "He is Lord!" Jesus Christ, His work on the cross, His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and future coming again would be the center of this worship.

This Ancient-Future worship would hold to the biblical four-fold pattern for worship, Gathering, Word, Table, and Dismissal, would also be "bathed" in Scripture and prayer, and would feature meaningful participation by lay persons. Prayers would include several types, including invocation, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession. One of

the worship's primary elements would be the Table of the Lord, open to all professing believers. Re-membering the Body of Christ, so important to early Christians, means so much more than a passive recalling of His death and resurrection: re-membering means reuniting the members of the Body, this is to say, we believers, with our Head, Jesus Christ. Gathering at the Table would be a joyful, intentional celebration of His presence among us as we are reunited with Him. As in keeping with an early church tradition, the opportunity for healing prayer would be offered to worshipers after partaking in Communion.

This convergent worship would hold that healthy corporate encounters with God engage many senses and would welcome the appropriate place of the arts: it would, at least loosely, follow the ages-old Christian year cycle and affirm that sign, symbol, and the creative arts are vibrant, vital parts to healthy worship.

And what about music? Not wanting to lift music to an idolatrous status of some kind of new sacrament, the worship would rather use music as a servant to the word, and to the Word. Neither music nor worship leaders would be center stage. No slick, performance-oriented worship here: rather, it would take the Kierkegaardian model wherein God is the audience, the whole gathered assembly the "performers", as it were, and the clergy and leaders the "prompters."

Music would be convergent, taking the full, rich tradition of Christian history as its wellspring for inspiration. I can imagine a repertoire that would be widely diverse, but skillfully and meaningfully used to help people worship. Whether it be chant, or hymn, or classical, or contemporary, it would be excellent and it would be used not in a merely functional way, but rather with pastoral intent and care for worship design and theological integrity.

Can you envision a citywide worship experience— perhaps something like this? What would worship look like if people from all over Knoxville— from all walks of life, from many races, from disparate denominations— came together for worship? I just want to be with folks who really want to worship. Many of us are thirsty. *What about you?*

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