

City Reformed Presbyterian Church is dedicated to vibrant congregational singing as part of regular worship. To encourage a strong culture of biblical worship, we believe our singing should reflect these core principles.

### **Praying in the Spirit through his Word**

Congregational singing is a form of prayer, and as such, is a work of the Holy Spirit within the hearts of the congregation. Through his Word, the Holy Spirit awakens our souls and gives us the hearts to pray as we should. Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6, and our songs should reflect his own.

- Singing should reflect the Lord's Prayer by exalting him in praise and expressing our dependence on and desire for him.
- Songs should use Scripture, particularly the Psalms, as the content and inspiration for singing. While not all songs repeat Scripture word for word, every song should have some sort of connection to Scripture in theme or content.
- Songs should play a role in remembering the redemptive story of God and be theologically representative of Scripture.

### **Singing with Mind, Body, and Spirit**

Jesus defines what is excellent in Matthew 22 when he commands us to love God with our heart, mind, and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. Our singing is excellent when we engage our minds, bodies, and spirits as we gather together in a unified expression of love for God and one another.

- Songs should engage the mind with rich lyrical content. This sometimes means many words are needed to expand a theological idea, but it can also mean songs are chosen to focus the mind on a specific truth through greater reflection or repetition.
- Songs enable the bodies of the congregation to participate in singing. This means songs are chosen to be singable for the majority of those gathered.
- Songs should reflect the entirety of the spiritual life of Christians as they are found in Scripture. This means songs should give voice to a range of emotions, such as lament, thanksgiving, joy, doubt, faith, and hope, to name a few.

### **Corporate Unity and Participation**

The Apostle Paul says in Ephesians 5 that we can have unity when the fullness of the Holy Spirit is expressed in the form of singing. As an outpouring of this unity, singing requires corporate empathy and intentional leadership.

- Songs should be teachable and memorable for the congregation in order to encourage private or family use throughout the week.
- Songs should encourage the congregation to listen and participate with one another, making our voices a consistent aspect of the musical culture.
- Instrumentation and embellishment should highlight the congregation and enable deeper participation. This may mean simplifying accompaniment and musical performances in order to comprehend complex lyrics, or it may mean embellishing the voices to encourage greater expression.

## **Ecclesiastical Expression**

We believe that the church catholic, according to the Apostles' Creed, includes God's people from all times and all places. The worship in Revelation 5 celebrates Christ as King of not only the living, but also of those who are waiting for the consummation of our great hope. Their songs, and ours, reflect the timeless and universal nature of the Church.

- Our song library should include old songs of the faith as well as modern songs.
- Our singing should celebrate the diversity of the global church as much as our resources and leaders are able to serve our local community.
- Musicians and poets within our congregation are encouraged to give voice to our specific context of worship by writing new songs.

## **Miscellaneous Guidelines For Weekly Song Selection**

These guidelines are meant to describe the general culture of singing at CRPC, not as hard-and-fast rules. On any given week, not every guideline will be fully represented.

Each set of 4-7 songs (depending on the week or service) should:

- balance between older and modern songs
- balance between Psalm/Scripture text and theological songs
- balance between songs that are lyrically complex and shorter reflective songs
- balance between widely known (popular) and contextual songs only known to our congregation (including original songs)
- enhance the narrative arch of the liturgy, helping to tell the story of redemption
  - The Gathering Song (first song) should usually be more energetic, focus on the goodness and holiness of God that invites us into his presence, and be a song the congregation sings well.
  - The Song of Renewal should generally focus on the grace and mercy we receive from God.
  - On weeks absent of the Lord's Supper, the Song of Thanksgiving should reflect the theme of the sermon.
  - On weeks that celebrate the Lord's Supper, the Songs of Thanksgiving should reflect elements of Communion. When possible, these songs can also connect to the sermon topic.
  - The Sending Song (last song) should point us forward in thanksgiving and hope and should be a familiar song that the congregation sings well.
- In addition to picking songs, the music leader should also consider what Scripture is being used or referenced in the songs chosen. Within the gathering set of songs, the song leader should pick a Scripture to be read as part of the singing time (AM service only).
- The song leader should review the liturgical content and sermon topic with the preacher in order to craft a cohesive worship narrative.
  - The preacher provides the weekly liturgy and sermon info by Tuesday at 2pm.
  - If the song leader is not the music director, he/she should review the song set with the music director by Wednesday evening.
  - Song sets should be finalized and submitted on Planning Center by Wednesday night, in order for the bulletin to be created Thursday morning.