

Toward A Philosophy Of Music At VPC

Music is a gift given by God to those made in His image for artistic expression and human encouragement. In the context of the church's worship of God, music is for the purpose of:

Expressing praise and thanksgiving to God and faith in God. As the church sings to her Lord, God's people are edified and the gospel is proclaimed. (BOCO 47:3; 51:2, 3 – W.C.F. 21:2, 26:1)

BOCO 47:3

The end of public worship is the glory of God. His people should engage in all its several parts with an eye single to His glory. Public worship has as its aim the building of Christ's Church by the perfecting of the saints and the addition to its membership of such as are being saved – all to the glory of God. Through public worship in the Lord's day Christians should learn to serve God all the days of the week in their every activity, remembering, whether they eat or drink, or whatever they do, to do all to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31)

BOCO 51:2

In singing the praises of God, we are to sing in the spirit of worship, with understanding in our hearts.

BOCO 51:3

It is recommended that Psalms be sung along with the hymns of the church, but that caution be observed in the selection of hymns, that they be true to the Word. Hymns should have the note of praise, or be in accord with the spirit of the sermon.

WCF 21:2

Religious worship is to be given to God, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; and to him alone; not to angels, saints, or any other creature: and, since the fall, not without a Mediator; nor in the mediation of any other but of Christ alone.

WFC 26:1

All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by his Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.

In this worship context:

We affirm that our music is to be a means of glorifying God.

We deny that music is to be used for merely artistic expression.

We affirm that worship music is a teaching vehicle that conveys God's Word.

We deny that music is to be used to entertain God's people.

We affirm that some kinds of music distract God's people from the worship of God.

We deny that the music chosen for worship is neutral or based merely on personal preference.

We affirm that God has given us principles to practice in selecting music for worship.

We deny that the Bible has nothing to say about the music we use in God's worship.

We affirm that the evaluation of appropriate worship music must transcend categories such as traditional / contemporary, hymn / praise song.

We deny that the usefulness of worship music depends on the date it was written.

1. Since music is a vehicle of the teaching ministry of the church, music lyrics should always be sound in their doctrine. Worshipful songs are to be, "theology put to music", and should be just as true to God's word as the sermon is.

(Col. 3:16) (BOCO 51:3)

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2. The focus of our singing should be on God. We should seek to address Him in our songs. This does not mean that all our songs should do this. Sometimes we will address each other, calling each other to the wonder of who God is and what He has done /is doing /will do for His covenant people (Eph. 5:19; Rev. 4:8-11, 5:12-13, 7:15, 15:3-4).

3. Since we are to sing to each other in worship, the music we choose must be “singable” by the congregation. Although the songs we sing will not always be at first familiar to everyone, they should be songs that, with some effort, can be joined in by the congregation (Col. 3:16; Rev. 19:5).

4. God has given us certain ways or “elements” He wants us to use to worship Him. The music we use should fit these “elements” and enhance them, not detract or distract from them. (BOCO 47:9; W.C.F. 25:5, 21:1)

BOCO 47:9

The Bible teaches that the following are proper elements of worship service: reading of Holy Scripture, singing of psalms and hymns, the offering of prayer, the preaching of the Word, the presentation of offerings, confessing the faith and observing the Sacraments; and on special occasions taking oaths.

WCF 25:5

The purest churches under heaven are subject both to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated, as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan. Nevertheless, there shall be always a church on earth, to worship God according to his will.

WCF 21:1

The light of nature showeth that there is a God, who hath lordship and sovereignty over all, is good, and doth good unto all, and is therefore to be feared, loved, praised, called upon, trusted in, and served, with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the might. But the acceptable way of worshiping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshiped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation, or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.

5. At least some of the songs we sing should be Psalms or portions of the Psalms. (Col. 3:16) (BOCO 51:1,3,5; W.C.F. 21:5).

BOCO 51:1

Praising God through the medium of music is a duty and a privilege. Therefore, the singing of hymns and psalms and the use of musical instruments should have an important part in public worship.

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BOCO 51:5

The proportion of the time of public worship given to praise is left to the judgment of the minister, and the singing of psalms and hymns by the congregation should be encouraged.

WCF 21:5

The reading of the Scriptures with godly fear, the sound preaching and conscionable hearing of the Word, in obedience unto God, with understanding, faith, and reverence, singing of psalms with grace in the heart; as also, the due administration and worthy receiving of the sacraments instituted by Christ, are all parts of the ordinary religious worship of God: beside religious oaths, vows, solemn fastings, and thanksgivings upon special occasions, which are, in their several times and seasons, to be used in an holy and religious manner.

6. The music in our worship should, as much as possible, “match” the lyrics we are singing. For example, “meditative” music would not be used to sing Psalm 150 (I Cor. 14:33)

7. The music we use should compliment the two dimensional mood of Biblical worship. For example, songs should be appropriate for when joy is being expressed and reverent when the awesomeness and majesty of God is being expressed (Psalm 2:11). (BOCO 47:8)

BOCO 47:8

It behooves God’s people not only to come into His presence with a deep sense of awe at the thought of His perfect holiness and their own exceeding sinfulness, but also to enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise for the great salvation, which He has so graciously wrought for them through his only begotten Son and applied to them by the Holy Spirit.

8. We must give God our very best in music. We must never settle for what is mediocre or merely popular (Heb. 13:15; Psalms 33:3; I Chron. 15:22; II Chron. 34:12)

The Book Of Church Order references:

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