

What Is Covenant Worship: Characteristics to Be Encouraged

Our Covenant church identity (*our tradition, values, and mission*) informs how we worship. As a practical expression of our identity, we encourage Covenant churches to consider the following as they plan worship services. As Efreem Smith has said: “In this family...”

- ❖ Because we are multicultural church, we encourage a “mosaic” approach to the elements of worship. We value the heritage, tradition and cultural identity markers of every worshiper. The Spirit unites us. We long for each member of the worshiping community to celebrate their cultural identity, even as they worship with the full and diverse family of God. Members of our worshiping community aren’t expected to lose their racial or cultural identity in order to be a part of this family.
- ❖ Because we are an apostolic church that retells the story of God’s redemptive work in the world, we encourage worship planning that expresses, presents and remembers 1) the grand story of God’s redeeming work through Christ and 2) our part in that story.
- ❖ Because we affirm the centrality of scripture, we encourage worship services to include segments of scripture reading without specific interpretive commentary. While interpretation and teaching are valuable, scripture must be allowed to ‘speak for itself.’
- ❖ Because we are a missional church, our worship celebrates and articulates an understanding of the kingdom of God that informs how we minister, live in and serve the world.
- ❖ Because we are a sacramental church we encourage communion and baptism as part of worship.
- ❖ Because we affirm a conscious dependence on the Holy Spirit, we encourage both prayerful planning prior to worship services and flexibility to the leading of the Holy Spirit during worship services.
- ❖ Because a major component of our theological history is our multifaceted understanding of the doctrine of the atonement, we embrace the multiple biblical metaphors for the atonement, and caution against worship expressions that promote one metaphor to the exclusion of others. Multiple metaphors help us understand the doctrine of the atonement more fully. Therefore, rather than a sole focus on penal substitution (*i.e. the wrath of God appeased*), we encourage the celebration of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection as examples of God’s love, of Christ’s victory over sin and death, and of Christ’s transformation of humanity’s relationship with God.
- ❖ Because we affirm the church as a body of believers, our worship expresses both individual and communal devotion. While both individual and corporate devotions are described in the Bible, our culture’s preoccupation with the individual necessitates that greater attention is given to the expression of the community in worship. “We” language is, therefore, encouraged.

- ❖ Because we affirm the priesthood of all believers, our worship services emphasize participation over presentation. While presentation is sometimes useful and appropriate, the goal of all presentation should be engagement of the congregation as worshippers.

- ❖ Because we love our global mission as a church (*to make and deepen disciples, start and strengthen churches, love mercy and do justice, develop leaders, and serve globally*) we encourage celebration of our worldwide mission in a variety of liturgy, including song and other worship expressions.

Developed by ECC Commission on Worship/2013