

Community BAPTIST CHURCH

Music Philosophy

Foundational Tenants

1. Music is an indispensable part of corporate worship.
2. Corporate worship must exalt God.
3. The Lordship of Christ must be manifested in every aspect of corporate worship.
4. Musical activity outside the parameters of corporate worship will differ from music used in the worship setting.

Purpose Statement

In order to glorify God our music must be scripturally accurate in content, unique in style, excellent in ministry.

Principles Governing Worship Service Music

We believe that music employed in gathered worship (including wedding ceremonies, memorial services, and other types of worship services) should be:

1. Biblical—As our rule of faith and practice, the Word of God is our authority. It contains sufficient principles, examples, and directives to inform our concept of worship music. Music serves in worship as praise, prayer, and proclamation (Ps. 96; Ps. 51; 1 Chr. 25:1). Although there are distinctions, in these ways the music ministry shares similar roles and goals with the pulpit ministry. Music may carry our thanksgiving as well as our lament and cries for mercy (Ps. 95; Ps.102). It should include psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, voices, and instruments (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16–17, Ps. 150). Sung texts must not conflict with the teachings of Scripture, and the Scriptures themselves are the best texts for worship (Ps. 119:54, 2 Tim. 3:16).

2. God-centered—Texts and hearts should be focused on God, who is both the subject and object of worship (Ps. 22:22; Ps. 100). The music is offered principally to Him, rather than to each other, and it is for his glory, not for our own. Yet it should also edify, admonish, and teach the body of Christ (1 Cor. 14:26, Col. 3:16). It is a communal activity. Applause for musicians in the context of worship is therefore unnecessary and unbiblical. Although clapping one's hands to God is mentioned in the Psalms, in our cultural context applause is overwhelmingly associated with the entertainment industry, and so it is best avoided as a worship response.

3. Excellent—Excellence is, first of all, an attribute of God (Gen. 1:31; Ps. 8:1). We should offer Him the best we can and nothing less. This has to do with the intrinsic and extrinsic qualities of our music—its melody, harmony, rhythm, form, and texts—which will be judged according to musical standards of excellence, as well as its appropriateness for a worship context and its delivery by the musicians offering it. Decisions about the quality and type of music offered in worship are entrusted to the Music Director who will, in conjunction with the Elders, consider musical, theological, cultural, and other informing aspects when making such decisions for the congregation. Excellence should never become a goal in and of itself, however, and it does not substitute for offering music with the proper spirit.

4. Holy Spirit directed—Without the work of the Holy Spirit, our efforts are meaningless (John 4:24, 6:63; 1 Cor. 2:13). Music is not intrinsically worship. Without due caution, one can actually be guilty of worshiping the music that one enjoys. It is important to be mindful of the distinction between spiritual truth and musical pleasure. Worship directed anywhere but to God is idolatry.

5. In truth—Truthfulness in worship refers to the actions we take, the attitudes of our hearts and the intentions of our minds. These should align with biblical teaching on worship (John 4:24). Our musical offerings should be genuine and offered to the best of one's ability. The congregation and its leaders should sing psalms and hymns with understanding and with conviction—with the mind and the spirit (1 Cor. 14:15). Truthfulness should characterize all that

we offer God (John 4:24) and this extends to music, musicians, and musical instruments.

7. Well prepared—Because our music should be excellent and skillful, it follows that it must be carefully chosen, adequately rehearsed, and presented by musicians who have prepared themselves before God (1 Chr. 25:6–7). Choirs (adult and children’s) and soloists should be well-prepared for the significant roles they will play in corporate worship. Worship is not an opportunity to “try out” one’s ability or to showcase anyone or anything.

8. Meaningful—Our musical offerings must be intentional and have purpose. They should never be trite or perfunctory (Mt. 6:7, 15:8–9). The Music Director, in conjunction with the pastor, carefully selects the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs sung in worship. All other music is selected or approved by the Music Director, who by biblical example is to be the guardian of the people’s praise (1 Chr. 15:22). An attempt is made, whenever possible, to make service music meaningful by suiting it to a particular element of the service and/or to the theme of the sermon.

9. Of the people—Largely this means that our music will find its basis in congregational song. It also means that the congregation should be fully involved in singing, listening, and learning (Ps. 111:1, 149:1). This characteristic informs our musical choices—that generally our music should be accessible to the people (or made accessible/taught by communicating information about it) although it is directed principally to God. This does not mean, however, that music selected will not require thought or that it will be “popular” in nature or immediately accessible to all who hear it.

10. Joyful and emotional—One of the most significant aspects of music in worship is that it should reflect the joy of being a Christian (Psalm 47:1) and a thankful, grateful spirit (Eph. 5:19). There are many other emotions inherent in music-making, and the book of Psalms provides examples of the musical expression of many of these within the context of worship.

11. Intelligible—This parameter has ramifications for sung language, which on most occasions should be English. Language used in worship should be comprehensible, and texts for non-congregational music will typically appear on the screen. When other languages are used, a translation will be given so that worshipers can fully interact with the textual and musical meaning (1 Cor. 14:7–10, 19). Musical style should also be intelligible—clear, understandable, and explained when unusual or difficult.

12. Authentic—Authenticity in worship is related to truthfulness, but here refers to the realm of aesthetics. We utilize live musicians for worship service music and believe that it is important to do so. The Bible models this in many places. We do not use pre-recorded music or accompaniment tracks both because this precludes other participants from the Body and because such recordings are historical rather than organic. The use of live musicians affords flexibility in tempo, nuance, time, pitch, and all of the other living aspects of music.

Principles Governing Music in Other Church Gatherings

These principles are intended to govern music that is used in activities such as Bible studies, small groups, banquets, meetings, coffee houses, retreats, conferences, and other church functions.

1. God honoring—All music for these activities should be God-honoring and biblical with regard to text and music, in keeping with the principles outlined in this document.

2. Leadership—The church's Music Director, in partnership with pastoral staff and ministry leaders, will oversee music and musical events occurring within the church buildings outside the context of regular worship services or Sunday School, and in any setting involving a function approved as a ministry of Community Baptist Church. Primarily this is to

safeguard the church and to ensure a level of quality by having an educated musician guide in such decisions.

3. Procedure—Any ministries of Community Baptist Church that desire to engage guest musicians, soloists, or instrumentalists for church approved or sponsored services or functions, should consult with the Music Director first. Though musical style will be more broadly defined outside the context of worship services, standards of excellence will be upheld for all events.

Principles of Music Education

We believe that Community Baptist Church is responsible to educate our people in music. We seek to educate the people through:

1. Hymn singing—Congregational hymnody and psalmody teach and propagate our faith even as we sing to God. They bear witness to the lost and help the Christian recall biblical teaching. They also are means for every Christian present to be a musical participant in worship and to join the heavenly choirs that praise God without ceasing (Eph. 5:19–20; Col. 3:16–17; Rev. 4 and 5).

2. Choirs—Some time is spent in all choir practices learning basic music theory, learning principles of God-honoring music, and learning the importance of harmony between text and music style. Our children's choirs seek to instill a love for God-honoring music, the ability to read music, and a desire to minister to God's people, for God's glory through music. (Ps. 8:2; 78:1–8, Mt. 21:15–16). The example of Scripture is for parents to teach children, who will in turn, teach their children (1 Chr. 25:6–8). Since many adults today do not have sufficient musical literacy or education to do this, we provide channels for the general musical education of our children through choirs, or by providing contacts for private lessons from teachers within our assembly.

3. Choral and instrumental ensembles—The choral and instrumental groups at Community Baptist Church offer opportunity for musicians to edify God's people and minister for God's glory.

5. Hymn services—Occasionally the congregation is led in a brief hymn service during evening worship. Generally, the hymns are linked by

theme. This forum provides contextual information and teaching about psalmody/hymnody so that the congregation is intellectually engaged with what it sings.

6. Hymns-of-the-Month—Each month a new or less familiar hymn is sung during evening worship throughout the month with the goal of expanding the congregation’s hymn repertoire.

7. Music Internships—We regularly have the opportunity to work with Christian colleges to train future Music Leaders. These students will typically spend one semester learning under the Music Director of Community Baptist Church and will participate in every aspect of the music/worship ministry at the church.

Principles Governing Music and the Individual

Community Baptist Church has no direct authority over the music that individuals choose to purchase or over that to which they listen or in which they participate. The church does not seek to make such decisions nor to determine what is good or bad music for its members with respect to their private lives. However, the following concepts and Scripture passages are offered for consideration when choosing music for oneself or for one’s household:

1. Music is an integral part of the Christian life and should be encouraged in the home, particularly in family worship. Luther (with hymnody) and Calvin (with psalmody) both encouraged singing in the home. Singing and learning to play instruments is consistent with biblical teaching (Ps. 92:1–3, Ps. 98, Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:15–21). Singing is, in fact, one of those few activities that we know is eternal (Rev. 4 and 5). It also gives opportunities to glorify God inside and outside the church.

2. Music is a powerful medium that teaches and communicates things in deep ways. It can overpower other verbal or written teaching with ease. There is good and bad music. Music is not neutral—it will affect those who listen either positively or negatively. As such, musical choice is essentially an ethical choice. Texts that are anti-God, anti-authority, or humanistic (which can

appear in any musical style) will have a negative effect. Styles that are associated with baser things will not usually be edifying and would best be avoided. It is left up to the individual under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to determine what is God-honoring or destructive in this regard.

3. Most people identify with a certain style of music or several styles as a means of defining themselves (sociologically, intellectually, and in other ways). The music to which we listen shapes our character, personality, and mind. Music is not without moral substance or consequence. Parents especially should be mindful of this on behalf of their children and be cognizant of aesthetic concerns as well.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things”— (Philippians 4:8 ESV)

Many of the principles and much of the content of this philosophy are borrowed with permission from the *Theology-Philosophy of Music* statement of Tenth Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia, PA, www.tenth.org. Also, the statement is published as an appendix in, *Singing and Making Music: Issues in Church Music Today* (P&R, 2006).