

Worship through Song Policy *Redemption Hill Church*

Corporate Worship is Teaching

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
-Colossians 3:16, ESV

...addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, - Ephesians 5:19, ESV

Congregational song is part of the teaching ministry of the church. Church musicians and pastors should ask themselves: if our people learned their theology from our songs what would they know in twenty years about God, the cross, the resurrection, the offices of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity, creation, justification, election, regeneration, the church, the sacraments, and all the other fundamental doctrines of the faith? - Kevin DeYoung

According to Scripture, corporate worship through song is instructive. When we gather, what we proclaim with our lips through singing shapes how we think about God, ourselves, and the mercy He offers us through His Son. Therefore, at RHC, we want our songs to be rooted in Scripture. We want them to be fitting for corporate worship while edifying the Body of Christ, rightly shaping the minds and hearts of God's people. In short, our songs should be theologically rich, God-glorifying, and Christ-exalting. Our songs should be vertical—declaring the glorious majesty of God—and also horizontal, encouraging and admonishing one another in the truth of the gospel.

Choosing New Songs

Choosing worship songs can be challenging. While we want to sing time-tested, God-honoring hymns, we also desire diversity in our music and to sing new songs to the Lord (Psalm 96:1). So, how do we decide which songs we will sing when we gather as a church? The elders at RHC carry the weighty responsibility of shepherding God's flock. As part of this role, they must protect the church from false teachers and unsound doctrine (Acts 20:28).

However, we must recognize that songs are written by fallible humans, who often demonstrate their imperfection. For generations, Christians have embraced truth-filled hymns composed by authors who held questionable beliefs or later fell away from the faith. Here are a few examples:

- ***A Mighty Fortress is our God*** written by Martin Luther. Note, Martin Luther also wrote *The Jews and Their Lies* and *On the Ineffable Name*, which were rooted in hostility and horrific views toward Jews.
- ***Come Thou Fount*** written by Robert Robinson, who wandered away from the faith years after he wrote the song.
- ***It is Well with My Soul*** written by Horatio Gates Spafford. While Spafford held to sound views on God's Sovereignty, his views on the Holy Spirit, and eternal punishment, were far from biblical, and at worse heretical.

Should songs that strongly proclaim the truth of God's Word be excluded from corporate worship due to the errant beliefs or practices of their authors or associated churches? If that were the case, our selection of songs would likely be quite limited.

There is a clear tension in choosing songs for worship. The elders have diligently sought the Scriptures, prayed, and carefully considered these matters. To protect the congregation from potential heretical influences, the elders have decided that songs from certain ministries should not be included in corporate worship. Therefore, songs from ministries that promote deviant or heretical teachings will not be played during worship services.

Specifically, due to the current popularity and dangerous teachings of Bethel Ministries (which holds a heretical view of the atonement and the person of Christ), Elevation Church (which promotes a modalist view of the Trinity), and Hillsong Church (which endorses the prosperity gospel), songs from these ministries will not be included in our Sunday gatherings. Other songs will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Please note: we want to remain vigilant in choosing songs from ministries that may be questionable. If you have concerns about a particular song, please consult the Worship Deacon before selecting it.

Each new song should be: 1. Theologically sound, 2. Scripturally based, 3. God-glorifying, and 4. Christ-honoring. Additionally, every song should be suitable for corporate worship and chosen with the goal of teaching the congregation rightly about the God we worship. Our songs should proclaim God's transcendence and immanence, extolling Him for who He is and what He has done. They should also reach outward, encouraging us as pilgrims on our journey as Christ's followers.

How many new songs should we sing?

We don't want to overwhelm our congregation by adding new songs every week or even every month. We also want to continue singing the songs we know and love, including ancient hymns and time-tested songs from the past. The elders believe it's best to introduce a minimum of 5 new songs per year, and no more than 12. This means the song you really want to sing might not be included right away. Please don't be offended if that happens.

How do I request new songs?

New song requests should come from elders or members of the worship team. If you feel a song should be added to our list, you can submit a request. Keep in mind that the approval process may take several weeks. You will need to complete a New Song Request Form, which will prompt you to reflect on the song in detail. Below is the information that will be on the New Song Request form:

New Song Request form is found online at rhccartersville.com/worship

The form includes the following:

Song Name

Song Authors (may not come from Bethel, Elevation, Hillsong)

What Scripture(s) support, reflect the lyrics of this song?

What does this teach us about God, man, sin, redemption?

**You can access the request form online at rhccartersville.com/worship*

"We kindly ask that you submit no more than 2 requests per year, with all requests submitted by September. New songs will begin to be added in January at the discretion of the Worship Deacon. If you have questions about why your song wasn't selected, feel free to speak with the Worship Deacon. For any theological concerns regarding your song, you may discuss them with an elder.

Selecting Songs for Sunday

Songs for Sunday Worship should be chosen from an approved list (Google Sheet), which will be emailed to you once you are approved as a team member. The Worship Deacon will update the list as new songs are added. The team lead for the week will be responsible for selecting songs but may also ask team members to choose and potentially lead a song. All songs must come from the approved list. When selecting and ordering songs, please consider the following:

1. The liturgy of our church - We typically follow the gospel narrative with our order of service - Think about the following movements - Call to Worship/Prayer of Invocation (Creation) > Confessional Prayer (Fall) > Assurance of Pardon (Redemption) > Sermon from God's Word (Redemption) > The Lord's Supper and Benediction (Restoration).

We begin our service with a Call to Worship, so the first song should exalt God by highlighting His might, greatness, power, holiness, and other attributes. After the Call to Worship, we express our adoration of Him. Following the second song, we include a confessional prayer. The second and third songs could focus on the themes of sin and the beauty of forgiveness we have in Christ. Songs after the sermon should emphasize the work of Jesus and the redemption we now have because of Him, preparing our hearts for the Lord's Supper.

2. The Sermon for Sunday - Obviously, you won't have the outline for the sermon, but you should know the text most Sundays bc of our study guides. The songs on Sunday should help emphasize and support the preached word of God, prepping the hearts, ears, and minds of God's people to be fed the word. So, find common themes between the songs you pick and the text that will be preached on Sundays. Worship through Song should serve our Worship in God's Word.

3. Diversity and sing-ability of Songs - We love hymns! However, every song need not be a hymn. We want to engage the mind and hearts of God's people and He has given us a variety of music to do such. This is why there are a variety of Psalms in the Scripture. So, sing Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, and when appropriate, sing new songs unto the

Lord! We want our songs to be singable, as well. So, think of the wordiness of songs and your set lineup. Also, keep in mind the key in which you sing a song. If possible, try to accommodate all types of people. We want our people to sing! Hint - Try to aim for what the congregation as a whole can sing (think of men and women).

Call to Worship - What If I'm responsible for the Call to Worship?

We want people to be nourished by God's Word on Sundays. They will encounter it throughout the service—in the call to worship, in our songs, in the confessional prayer, and in the sermon. We also want people to hear the full scope of Scripture, both Old and New Testament. Here's a general guideline for selecting a Call to Worship text: If our church is in an Old Testament sermon series (e.g., Exodus), try to choose a Call to Worship from a New Testament passage that aligns with a theme from that Sunday's sermon. If we are in a New Testament series (e.g., Romans), look for an Old Testament passage that connects with the sermon's theme. This may not always be possible, so ultimately, let the Spirit guide your choice from God's Word. The Psalms are full of many passages that can be used for the *Call to Worship*.

The purpose of the Call to Worship is to engage the hearts and minds of the congregation with Scripture, preparing them to worship God through song. Choose a passage that is impactful yet not too lengthy