

Village Church of Gurnee - Statement on Corporate Worship

1. Definition of Corporate Worship

Corporate worship is the reverent, joyful, and humble response of God's people to their growing understanding and appreciation of the person and work of God. Village Church believes that the realization of genuine, wholehearted worship is the controlling purpose of our weekly Sunday morning gatherings. We join together, actively engaging our minds, hearts, and voices for the purposes of acknowledging the truths of God, celebrating the love of God, and proclaiming the glory of God.

2. Priority of Worship

Village Church considers worship that glorifies God and edifies believers to be the highest priority of its typical Sunday morning gathering, and structures the service accordingly. While evangelism is a major priority of Village Church, it does not see its typical worship service as seeker-targeted. There is no problem in removing obstacles to seekers as long as this adjustment does not violate the integrity of our primary purpose.

3. The Corporate Body and Worship

While recognizing the responsibility of every believer for the cultivation of his/her own private worship, Village Church sees the Sunday morning gathering as a uniquely and strongly corporate experience where God is the ultimate audience and recipient of the worship team-led congregational praise. Recognizing people come to church with a variety of life experiences (both good or bad) from the previous week, we desire people to come as they are to encounter God in worship. Therefore, Village Church will strive to promote truly congregational worship, convinced that a strong church body will together offer God-pleasing worship.

4. Blended Approach to Worship

Village Church desires to be both culturally nimble and historically attuned, blending the best of ancient worship practices expressed by devout Christians throughout Church history with the best of current worship practices in 21st century America. This may express itself in style/genre of music or various worship elements (prayer, scripture, song, etc.). Our typical Sunday service will therefore reflect a varying blend of traditional and contemporary forms of worship.

5. Forms of Worship

Biblical precedent and prescription call for the regular use of such worship forms as music and singing, prayer, the reading and preaching of God's word, observance of the biblical ordinances, encouragement to meditate upon God, and the offering of our lives as well as our financial resources unto him. Utilizing creative forms of worship (such as drama, art, media/tech, etc.) can also enhance the worship experience but ought not distract from the worship experience.

6. Posture in Worship

While the "posture" of the heart is more important than the posture of the body, Village Church encourages its people to offer wholehearted worship to God from a variety of physical postures—e.g. standing, sitting and kneeling—mindful that there are a variety of times in the worship service for each one.

7. Variety in our Music and Singing

Village Church utilizes a broad and varied repertoire of hymns and contemporary worship songs—all of which must have lyrics that are theologically sound and substantive: emphasizing who God is and what he's done. Hymns and songs selected for congregational singing or special music (in their form and content) should, as much as possible, fit into the theme and flow of the service. Being able to honor, celebrate, and navigate within a multicultural context by using a variety of musical styles also enriches the worship experience.

8. Unified Structure in Worship

Village Church believes that integrated, coherent worship services often have the most impact on worshippers. Therefore, while seeking to avoid triteness and artificiality, Village Church will strive (as much as possible) to focus each service around a unifying theme—a biblical or theological truth, usually about God himself—that guides and informs the service as a whole.

9. Prayer in Corporate Worship

Village Church believes that communicating with God through individual and collective prayer is essential to each service. We regularly practice each of the various types of prayer exemplified in Scripture—including praise, adoration, thanksgiving, confession, petition, and intercession. We also desire to bring variety and creativity into the ways we pray in the service.

10. Scripture in Corporate Worship

Village Church recognizes that the Old Testament and New Testament Scriptures are the unique location of God's written revelation of himself, his purposes and his will. Therefore, we believe that the careful reading and preaching of God's Word should be a dominant feature in our corporate worship. Our worship services will typically include Scripture readings—short or extended—besides the Bible texts read during the sermon. On occasion, it is also instructive to read historical or contemporary statements of faith which affirm key biblical truths.

11. The Offering

Giving back to God from the resources he has graciously entrusted to our care is an act of worship. Therefore, the offering time is an integral part of the corporate worship experience, and should fit into the flow of worship rather than be treated as an intermission.

12. Planning of the Worship Service

In order to attain higher levels of variety, creativity, and excellence, it is essential that our worship services be thoroughly and carefully planned, well in advance, by the Lead Pastor and Worship Leader (and others they choose to provide input) working cooperatively as a team. The planning team is also responsible for regular reflection on the correspondence between intended and actual outcomes.

13. Worship Leaders

Village Church believes that consistency of lifestyle and preparation of heart are the platform for public ministry. Christian character is foundational. It would be difficult for God to be rightly presented to the church through worship leaders who are not obedient and responsible to the Holy Spirit. Unconfessed sin and unrestored relationships will impede the work of God in our midst and, subsequently, will impede our ability to worship rightly. Hence, while recognizing the sinfulness of us all, Village Church requires a spiritual readiness on the part of all of those participating in the leading of worship. There is no substitute for having a heart for God that has been lived out consistently in one's life over time and a commitment to pressing on spiritually, and these things cannot be "drummed up" for the occasion.

14. Giftedness in Leading Worship

Spiritual maturity, godly character, calling, and giftedness are important. This does not imply that how well we perform musically, etc., is unimportant. A pure and willing heart must be accompanied by giftedness recognized by others in the church. This giftedness, if under the control of the character mentioned above, will both fuel the pursuit of musical excellence while simultaneously safeguarding from the temptation toward the kind of performance that is ego-based or entertainment-oriented that distracts from corporate worship.

15. Pre-Service Preparation

All members of the worship team on any given Sunday shall meet before the service, fully prepared, at a time designated by the Worship Pastor when they shall dedicate both themselves and the coming service to God. Any final preparations should be done before this meeting. This will help to promote an atmosphere of calm anticipation in the Auditorium.

16. Presentation of Worship Leaders

All those participating in the leading of worship should seek to present themselves so as to introduce no distraction from worship. Dress should be clean, modest and simple. During the service, full attention should be given to the worship experience.

17. The Heart of the Congregation

We affirm that the worship team along with the congregation together serve as worshipers and God is the audience. Village Church shall do all within its power to help our people cultivate hearts and minds for worship such that they are consistently preparing themselves in anticipation of corporate worship. This may include instruction about worship generally and admonition regarding specific behaviors conducive to worship in this local church.