

Philosophy of Music Ministry
Grace Community Church, Huntsville, AL

I. Our Foundation: The Glory of God

The chief purpose of all humanity is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. Therefore, the primary aim of our music ministry is doxological—to ascribe all honor and glory to the Triune God. We believe that worship is not an end but a means of grace through which God edifies His people and communes with them. Our music serves this ultimate end, joining the historic and heavenly chorus in praise of God's character and His redemptive work in Jesus Christ (Eph 1:3-14; Rev 5:9-14). Doxology (the praise of God) without theology (the truth of God) is impossible. If we knew nothing about God—His greatness, His holiness, His goodness, His gospel—we would have no reason to worship Him.

II. Our Content: Scriptural and God-Exalting Truth

The songs we sing are full of Scripture and shaped by Scripture. The content of our singing is governed by the Word of God. This essential principle is the conviction that the corporate worship of God must include only those elements that are explicitly instituted or commanded by God in Scripture. In essence, the Bible is the sole and sufficient guide for how God's people are to approach Him in public worship.

This principle does not mean that every detail of a worship service (e.g., the time of the service, the type of seating, the meter of songs, hymnbooks or screens) must be found in the Bible. Rather, it applies to the essential *elements* of worship—such as prayer, preaching of the Word, singing, and the observance of the ordinances (Baptism and the Lord's Supper). This also means that "worship" should not be limited to just "music" as if these terms are interchangeable. Music is a part of worship, but they are not the same thing. Another core implication is that humans are not at liberty to invent or introduce their own forms of worship, no matter how sincere or appealing they may seem. God alone determines how He is to be worshiped.

In practice, we are committed to selecting songs, both ancient and modern, whose lyrics are theologically rich, biblically faithful, and doctrinally sound according to our biblical convictions. Every song must serve to teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly (Col 3:16). The central theme of all our worship is the glory of our sovereign God as seen in His character and His redemptive plan, both in the salvation He gives and the Kingdom He promises.

III. Our Practice: Congregational and Excellent

The corporate gathering encompasses a panoply of scriptural worship expressions or mandates: preaching (2 Tim 4:2), scripture reading (1 Tim 4:13), prayer (Eph 6:18), music (Psa 150), singing (Eph 5:19-20; Col 3:16), giving (1 Cor 16:2), serving (Gal 5:13), and fellowship (1 Thess 5:11). All of these are biblical and important aspects of our corporate worship on Sundays or whenever the body of Christ is gathered for worship.

The primary instrument in corporate worship is the unified voice of the congregation. As a priesthood of all believers, our most vital act of musical worship is the robust singing of God's people together (Eph 5:19). Musical leadership and instrumentation serve to support, adorn, and encourage this congregational praise, never to supplant or distract from it. We pursue musical excellence not as a performance, but as a fitting offering to a worthy King, ensuring that our preparation and execution are skillful and free from distraction, thereby directing all attention to the greatness of God. The choice of instrumentation is a matter of preference that varies from one church to another, some foregoing it altogether. Paul encouraged the singing of psalms in Colossians 3:16. Since many of these psalms call for a variety of instruments, we believe that instrumental accompaniment is not only permitted but encouraged in Scripture. Our instrument choices are used to support the singing of God's people with an emphasis on excellence that does not overshadow the congregational voices.

Song selections are based on two primary criteria: theological truth and musical excellence. A song must first align with our doctrinal convictions to be considered. Following this criterion, its musical merit is evaluated. The music should aesthetically support the lyrical content, be accessible for congregational singing, and be well-crafted to avoid distractions. Songs that meet these standards are suitable for congregational use, irrespective of their musical style.

IV. Our Leaders: Accountable and Exemplary

For the sake of accountability and pastoral care, all who participate in leading musical worship at GCC must be members of the church. Participation on a worship team carries a degree of spiritual leadership. Because our corporate worship is an outward expression of our individual devotion, a musician's daily life must align with the truths we proclaim on Sundays. We do not expect perfection, but we do look for clear patterns of pursuing Christ, spiritual growth, repentance, and serving the wider church body in holiness (Eph 4:1). If a significant gap between a person's weekday life and their Sunday leadership is observed, then he or she will be lovingly asked to take a break from the team to focus on their relationship with Christ. This is true for every member, no matter their musical contribution, as our primary calling is to be worshipers whose hearts love and obey God (Psa 24:3-4, Mark 12:29-31). It is a unique and wonderful opportunity to lead God's people in exalting Him through musical worship. That reason alone is the main motivation for the music ministry at GCC, especially for those in leadership roles.