

CALVIN INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

WORSHIP HANDBOOK

Dear Worshiper,

The purpose of this booklet is to guide you through a series of questions to consider when you visit a church. These questions are structured to help you become more aware of the multiple levels of meaning in a worship service and to stimulate reflection on the relationship between theology, culture, and worship practices. As you visit a church, you are both a worshiper (participant) and an amateur cultural anthropologist (observer)! The goal is to have each role contribute to the other.

The Calvin Institute of Christian Worship is dedicated to learning about worship from Christians in all places and from all traditions, deepening the awareness of the breadth of the body of Christ, and promoting the unity of the Church worldwide.

Many churches are identified within a tradition or a denomination, and while the booklet does ask questions related to theology, you may find it helpful to research a church's particular denominational association.

With Gratitude,

The Staff of the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship

SPACE

*Worship and worship space are linked in a vital relationship.
Space expresses the Church's faith and serves God's mission.*

1. What does the outside of the worship space look like?

2. What does the inside of the worship space look like?

3. Where is the font? Where is the table? Where is the pulpit?

What other "furniture" or symbolic objects are present?

4. Is this similar or different from your home church? How?

STRUCTURE/ORDER

A worshiping community is renewed by an informed examination of the patterns and actions of liturgy.

1. What is the sequence of actions? Is it fixed or spontaneous?

2. What is the sequence of actions at your home church? Are there variations in the order? If yes, who is responsible for these variations?

PARTICIPATION

Since worship is an expression of the entire Church, the active participation and involvement of the congregation is necessary.

1. What mode of participation is required of worshipers: Silent meditation? Physical action? Mental action? Active singing? Other?

2. What emotions are expressed? What stimulates them?

3. How many distinct liturgical actions are there in which worshipers are called to engage (e.g., praise, confession, prayers, scripture reading, etc.)?

4. How is the collection/offering done? Who does it?

5. Is there a children's message during the service? Are there other forms of children's participation?

LANGUAGE

Worship is not simply expressed in words. A worshiping community is renewed by the verbal and non-verbal expressions of the liturgy.

1. Is the language conversational or stylized? Spontaneous or written out?

2. How is scripture reading done? By whom?

3. How is prayer done? By whom?

4. How is God addressed? Father/Jesus/Spirit? Transcendent/personal? Male/Female?

5. Is this similar or different from your home church? How?

HOSPITALITY

Worship witnesses to the gospel in ways that challenge destructive patterns within society and affirms justice, peace, and hospitality.

1. Are there greeters at the doors? A visitor's fill-in form?
2. As a visitor, did you feel warmly welcomed or uncomfortable? Why?
3. Is there a printed order of service? If yes, is it helpful to visitors?
4. Are visitors invited to communion? If so, how?
5. What does your church at home do to make visitors feel welcome and included?

MUSIC, ART & TECHNOLOGY

Liturgical art animates the life and faith of the community. A proper understanding of the relationship of worship to the arts contributes to our experience of the Divine.

1. Are instruments used in worship? Which ones?

2. Who leads worship: Pastor? Band? Choir? Dancers? Worship team? Are groups multigenerational?

3. Are visual arts present or used in worship? How? When?

4. Is technology used in worship? How? When?

CULTURAL INFLUENCE

Worship relates dynamically to culture. God's mission is served when attention is given to cultural expressions of faith and when worship accommodates a variety of such expressions.

1. Are cultural traditions reflected in the worship service?

Which ones? How?

2. Do you see any non-local influence in the way people worship?

If yes, give specific examples.

3. Is your worship service at home influenced by the culture? How?

THEOLOGY

Worship is both a venue for and a reflection of theological convictions.

1. What does the worship service imply about:

A. Who God is? And what God is like?

B. What the Church is? And what the Church is like?

C. What salvation is? And who salvation is from and for?

D. What Denomination is this church?