

CALVIN INSTITUTE OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

WORSHIP ABROAD HANDBOOK

Dear Worshiper,

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

The aim of this “participant-observer” exercise is to help you become aware of the multiple levels of meaning in a given worship service and to stimulate reflection on the relationship between theology, culture, and worship practices. As you visit your chosen church, you are worshipers (participants) and you are amateur cultural anthropologists (observers). The goal is to have each role contribute to the other.

If possible, please take 6-12 photos of architecture, furniture, art, preaching, the Lord’s Supper, baptism, congregational singing, praying, etc. Be sure to obtain permission prior to the service, and make every effort NOT to disrupt the service. (If you are part of a group visiting a service, please decide in advance which one of you will take photos.)

With Gratitude,

Anne E. Zaki

Resource Development Specialist for Global Focus

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name (optional): _____

Home Country: _____

If student, class level: _____

CHURCH VISIT INFORMATION

Country: _____

City: _____

Name of Church: _____

Denomination: _____

Date & Time of Worship Service: _____

Contact Person at Church: _____

Contact Information (email): _____

*Photos and information provided in this handbook may be posted on the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship website **www.calvin.edu/worship***



STRUCTURE/ORDER

A worshipping 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?



COMMUNITY

Worship is an expression and an experience which involves the entire Church.

1. What is the general composition of the assembly (number, age, gender, race, etc.)?
2. What roles are expected from and exercised by the different age, gender, and racial groups? Is any group excluded from certain roles? Why?
3. How does the worship service reflect a sense of community? For example, how do people occupy space, pray, pass the peace, share testimonies, etc?
4. Is this similar or different from your home church? How?



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. Who speaks? Is the language vernacular (language of the common people)?
2. Is the language conversational or stylized? Spontaneous or written out?
3. How is scripture reading done? By whom?
4. How is prayer done? By whom?
5. How is God addressed? Father/Jesus/Spirit? Transcendent/personal? Male/Female?
6. 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?

NOTES

If you would like this handbook returned to you, please include your name and address below:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____