

Direction for Oakwood's Worship Experience

Elder Team

July 11, 2010

Here at Oakwood, our mission is to transform ordinary people into fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. We believe that this is taking place right before our eyes as each of us continues on our personal and corporate journey of Loving God, Growing in Community, and Serving the Church and the World. As a body of believers who are in process, we know that our unity does not come from uniformity, but from being one in Christ (Gal. 3:26-29). We belong to Him.

Throughout the 27-year history of Oakwood, God has brought each of us here together in His perfect timing. Some of us were here when Oakwood had a different name. Others first got connected when we were meeting in a school. Some remember when the worship center faced a different direction and the little house was the youth center. Some have joined since our last building project and they have always thought of Oakwood as having Community Groups, a Children's ministry called Tree House, and a sister church called Candlewood. Through all the years and all the changes, we have remained a church that belongs to Jesus.

Over the last several weeks and months, we have been in the prayerful process of evaluating the future direction of our celebration arts ministry and the core values that guide our corporate worship. We thank you for your recent and continued prayers for us, as we need the prayer and encouragement of our church family. Just as changes have taken place in our location, facilities, ministries and music over the years, our worship styles have adapted and changed. We believe it is important that we be guided within these changes by our values. As we have evaluated and thoroughly discussed what our core values for worship are, and what they should be, four key values have remained.

They are:

1. Glorifies God
2. Leads Believers to worship God
3. Welcomes the Unchurched
4. Attractive to the next generation

We recognize that there is great diversity within our church and these values can be implemented in a variety of ways. We have sought to understand the preferences and needs of our current church family while looking to the future, understanding that our children's children most likely will not worship God corporately exactly the way we do today.

After evaluating and discussing our current practices, we are making some adjustments in specific areas of our worship experience, although many elements will remain the same. These changes are in direct response to the feedback you have given us, while maintaining our worship values.

Here are some of the adjustments that we will be making:

*Adjusting the volume level down for certain styles of music. For quite a while, we have used a decibel meter to monitor the sound level in the building, and we are now planning to adjust the volume down – we’ve already begun to move in this direction in the past weeks, though we will now be very intentional following July 11.

*Allowing for natural lighting by leaving the shutter blades partially to fully open. Adjustments will be made to the level of natural lighting, but the norm will be similar to how the shutters are today. The worship center may be darkened for special events or programs, but these short-term lighting changes will be pre-announced through the worship program. The use of black paper will be avoided.

*Stage/spot lighting will continue to be used but the spinning/moving lights will not be used during the worship service.

* Increasing the use of contemporized hymns within our worship sets.

Thank you again for joining with us in this process. We look forward to our future together as God continues to shape us into the people and church that He calls us to be.

Sincerely in Christ,

Your Elders



Values Pertaining to Contagious Worship

5-21-10

We describe Oakwood's approach to worship as Contagious Worship. Our target audience is God. We endeavor to guide believers to express adoration to God in a manner that honors and delights Him. We desire to encounter God through His proclaimed Word and experience His special presence among His worshipping people. We also strive to instruct, encourage, and challenge believers to apply God's truths to their lives. While we seek to employ the worship arts with excellence, we want our worship to be authentic. We believe God's people at Oakwood are to be active participants in worshipping God.

Ultimately, in worship we have an audience of One – our Triune God. All of us together are worshipers. As God provides talented people (musicians and technicians) to serve as Lead Worshipers, we will continue to aspire that all will focus on delighting God with public expressions of love and grateful obedience. We desire to worship through fresh, energetic, uplifting, inspirational, reflective, and reverent music as appropriate to the worship theme.

While we do not target our worship services to reach our guests – we do plan our services with them in mind. We want them to feel welcome and comfortable, without our employing unnecessary barriers that could hinder their coming to faith in Christ. Furthermore, we want them to know that while we desire them to come to faith in Christ, we recognize this often involves a journey; we want them to view Oakwood as a place that is safe to check out the claims of Christ at their own pace. We want them to "taste" our worship and begin to realize that God is real, personal, and very accessible. Our goal is to find the balance between worship that glorifies God, edifies Christ-followers and is not confusing to those who are searching. It is in that sense we pray our worship would be contagious. We ask God's Spirit to draw our guests to love God through Jesus as we do.

We also recognize that culture plays an important role in how people prefer to express their worship to God. Generally speaking, cultural styles related to the arts of music, lighting, drama, technology, etc., are spiritually neutral. Just as God is being praised in a multitude of languages throughout His world, so too even among the same language groups, He is being adored through many styles of worship. While we all have our stylistic preferences, God does not. Oakwood's leaders realize it is impossible to lead a large group of people in a cultural style that most speaks to the emotional hearts of every worshipper. Since we endeavor to pass on our faith to the next generation, we believe it is essential that we utilize the cultural styles of this age group. While change can be difficult, we believe it is loving for those who are more mature in their faith to choose to worship God authentically in any style rather than contend for a preferred style. While being devoted to Biblical integrity in worship, we strive to be culturally relevant. This means as our cultural styles transition, so will we. As we do so, our focus will always be an audience of One!

Bullet summary of these values:

- Glorifies God
- Leads Believers to worship God
- Welcomes the Unchurched
- Attractive to the next generation

Continuum of Worship Styles:

Culture progressively moves through the generations from traditional to progressive contemporary. The following are generalized descriptions of each category

1. Traditional:
 - Only hymns
 - Doxology, benediction etc.
 - formal dress
2. Blended Traditional:
 - Worship hymns
 - Some reflective choruses,
 - Formal to moderate formal dress
3. Blended Contemporary:
 - Contemporized hymns
 - Moderately upbeat contemporary praise and clapping
 - reflective choruses
 - business casual dress
4. Moderate contemporary:
 - mostly upbeat celebration of praise to God with clapping
 - several reflective yet contemporary choruses
 - some contemporized hymns
 - moderate stage & mood lighting
 - creative service elements (that incorporates life stories, dramas, theme design sets)
 - Use of video projections
 - full volume yet generally acceptable to 50's plus
 - casual dress
5. Progressive contemporary:
 - Heavily progressive celebration with enthusiastic clapping, possibly jumping with joy
 - Concert feel related to celebratory use of instruments and electric guitars in praise to God -
 - some reflective yet contemporary choruses
 - few to little contemporized hymns
 - extensive concert type lighting
 - Extensive use of video projections
 - creative service elements (that incorporates life stories, dramas, theme design sets)
 - very loud volume – not acceptable to many 50's plus but enjoyed by many of the millennial generation
 - very casual dress