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JANUARY-APRIL, 2005
VOLUME 15 NUMBER 1
Second Hymn: "O Jesus, I Have Promised"
C612, F402, L503, N493, P388, UN396, WC648 (PD)
Alternate tune: B365, F471
Alternate tune: VL120

Third Hymn: "Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation"
C275, E518, F346, R932, U559, V1525, W0747 (PD)
Alternate tune: F557, N400
Alternate tune: L367
Alternate tune: WC699

Several very old traditions are represented in this classic hymn, a seventh-century text translated by John Mason Neale, a ninth-century hymn tune by Henry Purcell (Westminster Abbey—enough the tune name represents an old tradition!), a Trinitarian theology for the final stanza, and of course, words that echo the biblical message of 1 Peter.

H. L. Hymnion gives several performance suggestions in his "Creative Use" series, or use the decent found in S-1.

Laura Jaquish Bartlett is introduced in Meet the Editorial Team on page 3.

**A LOOK AT THE LIGHT SIDE**

*Something's Got My Hymnal: Another Lighthearted Look at Choir Directing* by John Yarrington. You've found the other copies out there and your choir is in dire need of some serious, light-hearted, and occasionally irreverent humor. West's new book, based on a regular column in *Church Music Workshop*, is filled with humorous, less-than-serious situations and counterproductive behavior. *Something's Got My Hymnal* comes in three flavors: "More Hymnal Hysteria," "The Other Year," and "I Didn't Do It—Yarrington Does This!" This fun-packed volume includes chapters such as "This is Not a Test," "I Can't Cope with the Audience," and "What's 'Rite' for You?" A must for all choirs, and a great gift for your choir director.

Written by: John Yarrington
Published by: Abingdon Press

**Point of View**

My House Shall Be Called a House of... Announcements

Constance Cherry

What is actually going on in worship today? This is a question that has both intrigued and haunted me for quite some time. There is little remaining doubt that most churches in the United States have made significant alterations to their services of public worship in recent years. Some have incorporated change into the existing services while others have created entirely new services and added them to their menu of worship offerings. Alternatives to content, style, and order have ranged from modest adjustments to total renovation.

As I experienced worship change in my own church over the past decade, and as I witnessed change in the worship of many congregations, I began to have that funny feeling that something was missing. What was it? Yes, there were songs and sermons and offerings. There were video clips and PowerPoint presentations and children's sermons; there were choirs or praise teams or song leaders directing congregational singing; there were special musical numbers presented, mission moments, and an occasional service of communion.

Why then, the empty feeling? Why the intuitive sense that though it seemed to look and smell like worship, things didn't seem quite right? Was there truly something wrong, or was I simply more uncomfortable with change than I realized? I design, lead, and teach Christian worship as my vocation. Because of this, I naturally analyze and evaluate worship services. Over time, I began to notice some things that concerned me. I wondered if they were indicative of local church practices or if worship services in other places were cause for concern as well. I became aware of some glaring omissions, observing that some worship elements had replaced others. How widespread were these changes? And on what basis were these decisions made? Was it intentional to substitute some worship elements for others? Or did some worship items simply slip, unnoticed, out of the order of worship? If intentional, what was the thinking? If unintentional, were they missed—and if not, why?

The Purpose of the Study

In recent months, I have had the rare opportunity to visit a variety of churches in various states on Sunday mornings over an extended period of time. Realizing this was a unique situation, I committed myself to intentional observation as I attempted to acquaint myself, as much as possible, with current (or uncommon) practices in worship. I was curious to observe what is currently happening in Protestant worship in a general sense.

However, two aspects of current worship practice had become of particular interest to me: the use/dissease of scripture reading and prayer. I had begun to notice that a number of congregations were spending little if any time in either scripture reading or prayer while gathered for worship. As I began to gather and calculate data from the services I attended, I found that I had reason for concern. Believing that the reading of scripture and prayer are central elements of worship, I found this puzzling and troubling.

The specific purpose of my church visits was to determine the significance given to various components of the worship service, but in particular, the significance given to scripture reading and prayer.

Operating Assumption. As I have reflected upon the way time is spent in worship, I have operated from the assumption that the way we spend our time is an indicator of what we consider to be important. This assumption is not unique to this worship experiment. In relation to any activity, it is generally accepted that those persons or activities that are of high priority in our
lives receive greater time and atten-
tion than those persons or activities we consider to be of lesser impor-
tance. Those things we value are evident by simply looking at where we spend our time.

A priority is any person, thing, or event that receives the greatest attention in any given hierarchy of competing options. Our value judg-
m ents are made weekly causing some elements of worship to nudge out others when the order of service is planned. The question is what do we value? That which we hold to be a priority will merit our attention. Jesus said it best when he taught his followers “where your treasure is, there your heart will also be” (Luke 12:34). The central ques-
tion I raise is this: Is the way we spend our time in worship indicative of what we really believe is important?

The Particulars of the Study.

The parameters of the worship experiment I conducted are stated below:

- Period of time for worship service: February 17, 2002 to May 11, 2003 (sixteen months)
- Number of services attended in the sample: 30
- Number of services in the sample: 31
- Denominations represented in the study: 19

In the study, the spiritual experience of God was measured as a factor of importance to the congregation. The spiritual experience was measured as a factor of importance to the congregation. The spiritual experience was measured as a factor of importance to the congregation. The research conducted is informal in the sense that I did not undertake all of the criteria necessary to determine the spiritual experience. Initial research was conducted in a formal study, such as control group or evaluation studies to equal numbers of church members attending each worship style. The worship visits were not part of something serious and I simply accepted each opportunity as an invitation to visit the church and attend each church. The information obtained, therefore, must be taken in light of its limited scope. Even with the limitations of the study, I believe there are some noteworthy trends to be seen that may suggest that some theological reflection on the way we spend our time in worship is in order.

Collecting Quantitative Data.

The steps for collecting quantitative data were the same for each service:

1. I recorded the length of the entire service in total minutes.
2. I recorded the amount of time given to each element of service, using increments of time to within thirty seconds.
3. I assigned each element of worship to a "worship element category." (A category consisted of all worship items of the same type, for instance, all prayers within the service formed the category of prayer. See below.)
4. I totaled the number of minutes given to each category of worship element.
5. I calculated the percentage of time given per service to each category of worship elements.

Primary Categories of Worship Elements

All the elements of worship were placed in one of eight categories. These are listed below along with a description of the criteria for determining the category placement:

- Congregational singing: All types of congregational song.
- Prayer: All types of spoken prayer, not sung; 1
- Sermon: Included video clips if directly intended to aid in the sermon;
- Announcements and Greetings: Notice/speech communication to the church and shaking hands/greeting one another; 2
- Offering: The corporate collection of tithes and offerings; 3
- Reading of Scripture: Actual readings of scripture texts; does not include scripture found in song texts or biblical passages read in the context of the sermon; 4
- Presentation of Music: All music sung not corporately, including anthems, solos, instrumental pieces, and so on. 5

Sacraments/Ordinances: Holy Communion, baptism, baby dedications.

Other Liturgical Material: Musically related activities not represented in the primary categories; elements that are typically not found in every service. 6

Labeling Worship Styles

For purposes of this study, I labeled each service according to worship style. In many churches the worship style is identified by the category of its services, advertising them as "contemporary" or "traditional," and so forth; in which case I accepted their designation. When a worship style was not designated, I made a decision as to its most likely identification. I recognized that there is wide interpretation of what constitutes a worship style I used the following general guidelines.

Liturgical Services are highly influenced by liturgical mandates and/or expectations of denominational authorities for example, The Book of Common Prayer; much of the content is specified for universal use within the denomination; consistent and frequent use of the Eucharist.

Traditional Services that are moderately shaped by its denomination; use standard "mainline" worship elements, such as historic types of prayers (Collects, the Lord's Prayer, and so on), traditional preaching styles (often using The Revised Common Lectionary); standard/classic hymns, and service leadership offered by organ and choir.

Blended Services that combine traditional hymns with popular praise choruses; sometimes use broader, more varied instrumentation.

Contemporary Services that have a standard two-part form consisting of extended singing of "contemporary" praise music (led by praise teams and pop/rock band instrumentation), followed by an extended time of teaching.

In this article I hope to (1) share the results of my findings along with some general observations (other than scripture reading and prayer); (2) note some patterns of particular interest with respect to scripture reading and prayer (compare/contrast the way time is used in various worship styles); and (3) raise issues for theological reflection that such information suggests.

Results of Findings

Length of Services. The average length of service (all worship styles combined) was 79 minutes. The average length of each worship style is depicted here.

![Figure 1](image1.png)

**Observations**

1. The length of time given to Liturgical and Contemporary services is exactly the same.

2. The length of the blended services is exactly the average of the Traditional and Contemporary lengths of services (note- worthy in that blended is generally considered to be the "blend" between Traditional and Contemporary).

Liturgical Worship

![Figure 2](image2.png)

**Observations**

1. Sermons received the most time; announcements received the least.

2. There is a gradual spread of time per category.

Traditional Worship

![Figure 3](image3.png)

**Observations**

1. Sermons received the most time; sacraments received the least.

2. There is a gradual spread of time per category.
3. Presentational music is given more time than congregational singing.

Blended Worship

Blended Percentages Per Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregational singing</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preach</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psalms</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Announcements</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 9

Observations
1. Two activities, the sermon and congregational singing, constitute approximately two-thirds of the service (64%).
2. There is the largest gap of all services between the first two categories (sermon/congregational singing) 20%.
3. There is a noticeable gap between the two predominant categories (sermon and congregational singing) and the remaining six elements.

Observations of All Categories and All Styles
Using the graph below (Fig. 10), observations are made for the six categories other than scripture reading and prayer, which are addressed separately.

Comparison of Worship Styles by Category

Congregational singing was highest for Contemporary worship (22%) and least for Liturgical (14%). Liturgical and Blended worship had the same amount of congregational singing, 19%.

The sermon was highest for Contemporary worship (62%) and least for Liturgical (26%). The sermon time increases in order of categories moving from Liturgical to Contemporary. Liturgical (26%), Traditional (25%), Blended (37%), Contemporary (42%).

The inclusion of other liturgical material was highest for Contemporary (10%) and least for Liturgical (6%). Traditional and Blended worship had the same amount of other liturgical material (8%).

Time given to announcements was highest for Traditional (11%) and least for Liturgical (4%).

Presentational music received the highest amount of time in the Traditional services (19%) and the least in the Liturgical (8%). The time given in Contemporary and Blended services was similar (1% variance, Blended being higher).

The scriptures received the most time in Liturgical worship (20%) and then decreases in time dramatically with the other three worship styles resembling one another in time given: Blended 5%; Traditional and Contemporary received 2% each.

It is interesting to note that the average time of Blended worship in all eight categories appeared in the middle of the four worship styles without exception. In other words, in no category did Blended worship give either the highest or lowest amount of time to any element of worship, but rather represented a "blend" of the other styles.

Worship patterns with respect to scripture reading and prayer. The chart also (Fig. 10) shows the comparison of all categories. From this side-by-side comparison, I will observe how the practices of reading scripture and praying compare in amount of time to other worship elements and among worship styles.

The Practice of Scripture Reading

The amount of time given to scripture readings is highest in Liturgical worship (9%) and least in the Blended and Contemporary services (2% each), declining in order from Liturgical to Contemporary.

Liturgical Worship
- Scripture reading ranks fourth out of eight categories (preceded by sermon, sacraments, and congregational singing).
- Scripture reading receives more than twice the amount of time given to announcements.

Traditional Worship
- Scripture reading ranks fourth out of eight categories (13%).

Blended Worship
- Scripture reading ranks fifth out of eight categories (5%).
- Scripture reading receives approximately the same amount of time as announcements (variance of 2%, prayer being higher).

Announcements received more than three times the amount of scripture reading.

The Practice of Prayer

The amount of time given to prayer is highest in Traditional worship (13%) and least in Contemplative services (5%).

Liturgical Worship
- Prayer ranks fifth out of eight categories (8%).
- Prayer receives the same amount of time as does presentational music.
- Amount of time given to prayer is similar to that of scripture reading (1% variance).
- Prayer receives twice the amount of time given to announcements.

Traditional Worship
- Prayer ranks fourth out of eight categories (13%).
- Prayer receives less time than pre-sentational music (5% less).
- Prayer receives approximately the same amount of time as announcements (variance of 2%, prayer being higher).

Blended Worship
- Prayer ranks fifth out of eight categories (8%).
- Prayer receives less time than pre-sentational music (3% less).
- Prayer receives approximately the same amount of time as announcements (variance 1%, prayer being higher).
- As much time is given to prayer as to elements that constitute other liturgical material put together.
- Prayer receives four times the amount of time as scripture reading.

Contemporary Worship
- Scripture reading and the sacraments tied for the least amount of time in the service (2% each).
- Presentational music receives five times the amount of time than does scripture reading.
- Announcements received more than four times the amount of scripture reading.
- Presentational music receives twice as much time as prayer.
- Prayer receives approximately the same amount of time as announcements.

Theological Considerations. In the beginning of this article I identified my basic operating assumption—that the way we worship our time is an indicator of the value placed upon persons or things. Having said this, I do not mean to suggest that there should be equivalent amounts of time given to worship elements that or an element is a priority if it is given more real time than most other elements. In other words prayer, for instance, does not have to equal the amount of time given to the sermon in order to prove that we place value upon corporate prayer.
What I do mean is that:

We must consider seriously the worship elements that we include in our services and be knowledgeable about how to include these and not others.

We must examine the amount of time given to each worship element and ask the question, "Does the amount of time we give to this worship element truly represent the value we hold for it?" We must consider the relationship of time given to one element in proportion to another by asking the question, "Does the amount of time given to one element indicate greater or lesser priority than to every other worship element?" In other words, "Does the amount of time given to each element in proportion to the other represent the relationship of the elements?" What other worship components replace these and on what basis?

Jesus said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Matt. 21:12; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46). Do our corporate worship activities affirm this purpose? Based on the amount of time your congregation currently spends on each of the worship elements, complete this sentence: "My house shall be called a house of..."

Prayer is important to worship if for no other reason than that there is biblical imperative and historical precedence for prayer being a central act of the gathered community. In addition, I have long proposed that prayer in corporate worship is very important as a means of modeling the content and spirit of private prayer. Public prayer is, indeed, the way that private prayer is learned. Author Michael Horton goes even further by drawing a disturbing but worthy parallel between the amount of time spent in prayer during worship and that of our individual lives. He states, "If corporate prayer does not play an important part in our worship, it should not be surprising that it is marginalized in the individual lives of Christians."

What is implied if when little or no scripture is read in worship? What is the relationship between sustained passages of scripture read (or not read) and the sermon? How much "worship leadership" is inspired by scripture? How much of the content of worship elements are based upon the text of scripture? How content would we be if large amounts of scripture were read each time we meet for worship? How might we recognize that scripture reading, "takes up time" that could be given to other entertaining aspects of worship? How might we be less successful in the performance of our service if we did not have the benefit of scripture readings? We have been told that scripture reading is important in the worship service. How might we come to see that scripture reading, "takes up time" that could be given to other entertaining aspects of worship? How might we be less successful in the performance of our service if we did not have the benefit of scripture readings?

Prayer and sermons were counted in one of the music categories, virtually no time was given to taking up the offering or as worshippers were engaged otherwise in the collection of the offering. I therefore did not factor that as a separate category in the final analysis. 8. Responsive readings, if ever included, were included.

Postludias were not counted if they occurred prior to the stated time of the beginning of the service; they were counted if they occurred after the stated time for the beginning of the service. Postludias were not counted.

Examples of other liturgical material includes such things as free praise and dance, personal testimony, various confessionals, creeds, video clips not related to sermon, invitations to conversion/discipleship, liturgical dance, children's moments, prophecy, pausing of the peace, and so on.

For a helpful way to categorize worship on a broad other than style, see Lester Ruth, "A Rose By Any Other Name" in The Composition of Things Not Seen: Worship and Identity in the 21st Century, ed. Todd E. Johnson (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2003, 33-51).

The term "Blended Worship" has almost universally come to mean a service that uses both traditional hymns and contemporary praise choruses, therefore I choose to use this common definition for purposes of this study. One is hard pressed to find blended worship described in any other way. This is unfortunate in that truly blended worship is a mixture of the old with the new in expressing all of the elements of worship, including types of prayers, preaching styles, ways of celebrating the sacraments, and so on. For a more developed interpretation of blended worship, see Constance Cherry, "Blended Worship: What Is It, What It Isn't" in Reformed Worship 55 (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Publications, 2009).

It is possible that the domination of sermon, sacrament, and song in Liturgical Worship, with the remaining worship elements clustering at the bottom of the percentages suggest a emphasis on the historic twofold order of Word and Table.

14. One of these services was considered to be highly liturgical by typical standards and was therefore categorized as such, however the leaders specified a commitment to appealing to Postmodern individuals as a core value. This may have influenced the elimination of intercessory prayer in this case.


16. See Nahmiah 8:1-18 for an example of how the public reading of scripture reflected each of these adjectives.