

Worship.

A white paper.

What is Worship?

We adore God. He is the object of our affection. He has loved us, and we respond with love. We celebrate the God who was, and is, and is to come. He gives us the gift of worship through the Holy Spirit, we give it back in songs, dance, shouts, words, acts of service, and a thousand other expressions of lives fully surrendered to Him. God desires worshippers – not because He’s an egotist, but because He knows we become like whatever we worship. He wants us transformed into His likeness, made over into new creations. And that happens through worship.

Worship is not a song that is sung, it is a heart that sings.

Worship at Highpoint Fellowship

Out of the bewildering array of choices in styles, songs, instrumentation, and more, we have made conscious decisions to approach our worship at Highpoint Fellowship in a certain way. This whitepaper is an attempt to describe our approach.

We are a joyfully expressive church seeking to worship God by using the diversity of gifts and people God has brought to us to create our own sound, utilizing songs old, new, and in-between.

Joyful Expression.

We encourage Biblical expressions of worship: singing, dancing, clapping, shouting, and more. While nobody will ever force you to raise your hands or clap or dance or shout, we recognize the power of celebrating in joy what God has done, is doing, and will do.

Performance. Participation. Presence.

Generally we avoid pure “performance” songs. They happen rarely, usually to illustrate a point in the message. God can speak to us powerfully through performance, but our preference as a ministry is for participation. We like to hear the church family lifting their voices together. We like to see hands lifted together. God is enthroned on the praises of His people, so we like to build a big throne together. The musicians are not “performers” and the congregation is not the “audience.” We are all in it together.

But participation isn’t the end goal. We love it, but we’ll trade all the participation in the world in for the awesome presence of the Most Holy God. We crave His manifest power and Spirit. We long to be transported to His royal throne room. We don’t want to connect with the song, we want to connect with the One the song is about.

Our Own Sound.

The styles of music we play are intentionally diverse. We reflect our community in Central Texas, as well as the specific talents and gifts in the individuals God has brought to us. We don’t have a predetermined style and then force new people to fit it. Instead we want them to bring who they are and add it to the sound. We want their creativity and personality to come through.

You’ll hear Austin-appropriate rock/blues/country influences, along with Gospel, Bluegrass, Singer-songwriter, and even some songs in Spanish.

These ingredients will definitely change over time. As our community changes through the years, as the tastes for music shift, as God continues to bring more and more diversity to our family, we'll change as well.

Global, Local, Historical Songs.

We don't care about old songs or new songs *per se*, we just want to sing *good* songs. Those songs come from:

- ▶ *The Global Church.* God is speaking through and to the contemporary Church around the world through great worship songs. We sing many of the most popular songs in the worldwide church by artists like Chris Tomlin, Hillsong, Bethel Music, Matt Redman, and many more. This is roughly 66% of the songs we sing.
- ▶ *The Local Church.* We also believe God has something to say through and to our family. We love to sing songs that come from our own songwriters.
- ▶ *The Historical Church.* Songwriters have been penning praise and prayers for hundreds of years, and many of those expressions have never been surpassed. For that reason, we gladly incorporate older songs in our worship services.

Volume.

As a ministry, with the input of church members, and particularly under the guidance of our senior pastor, we've established a volume level target for our music. Our music generally runs about 88 decibels. We use a decibel meter periodically through the service to check the levels and make adjustments accordingly.

Based on surveys of other churches, that level puts us in the "lower part of average" for churches with contemporary worship services (a full band rather than just organ or piano or *a cappella*).

Is 88db a health concern? Published health guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control say you would need to be exposed to 4 straight hours of continuous 88db sound before there are health concerns. It's not just the volume, it's the continuous duration. The music portion of our Sunday services is roughly 30 minutes, and within those 30 minutes we have any number of times the music is quieter and/or we're speaking rather than singing. Your health matters to us. We're comfortable saying the level of our volume does not pose a health hazard.

If you have concerns about the volume whether too loud or too soft, we'd love to talk to you. Send me (Paul Lee) an email, give me a call, or better yet, let's talk in person. It's not scary, and I'll be glad to visit. As Worship Pastor I'm the person ultimately responsible for our music, including the volume. We have previously made adjustments in the volume targets, both louder and softer, based on feedback. It's impossible, of course, for everyone to have their way, but we do want everyone to have their say.

A suggestion: approaching the sound engineer while he's actively serving is not the best way to make a complaint or suggestion. The volume of a particular service is predetermined; the sound engineer is simply following the directions he's been given. However, I'll be glad to visit with you following the service.

*Sing to him a new song;
play skillfully,
and shout for joy.*

– Psalm 33:3 NIV

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