

# Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church

(PSPC)

## What We Believe About

# Worship

## @ Prinsep



**An Instructional Manual for Every Prinsep  
Worshiper**

19 October 2001



# Foreword

**I**n the last two decades, worship in the worldwide Christian Church has undergone tremendous changes. The onset of the Charismatic movement and the huge profitable Christian contemporary music has brought about some freshness to the worship music and forms. Yet, at the same time, like many revivals and renewal movements in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ, there are also undesirable effects.

For instance, the tensions arise between the advocates of contemporary worship and traditional worship. More often than not, the controversy centres on the musical styles and preferences, rather than on theological divergence. The sincere folk in our churches who champion for a worship renewal have often mistaken a change of musical styles and preferences in our worship as synonymous with a revival in worship. By this change in musical styles, they mean increase in tempo, volume, beat, and body gestures. Coupled with the change of musical styles is the jettisoning of anything that is “traditional” or that have been there in the church for ages – symbols, architecture, hymn-singing, and rituals.

On the other hand, we have the folk who have been worshipping God sincerely with European and American hymns, who do not see the need for any new songs and music to be added to their repertoire of songs sung in worship. Within this group of the faithful are people who have mistaken the idea that there is music that is distinctively Christian. Perhaps, they have not realised or have forgotten that some of the hymns were popular tunes of the day. What make a piece of music or song distinctively Christian are the lyrics (biblically and theologically sound), mood (style that fits the lyrics) and the use it is put into (the question of use or abuse). The Story that begins with Creation, Fall, Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost, continues through the apostles to us, and it will continue even after us, until our Lord Jesus returns, and the kingdom of this world becomes the kingdom of His Christ and He shall reign forever and ever! Amen.

It is against the background of confusion and controversy over the all-important preoccupation of the Christian – worship – that this paper ensued. While worship is all of life, Sunday worship, which is the gathering of a community of worshippers, is an equally important discipline, as much as our personal daily devotion. Sunday in and Sunday out, month in and month out, and year in and year out, we have been participating in the worship services (Sunday, wedding and funeral) of Prinsep. Yet, as part of the pastoral responsibility of the Session, a Worship Task Force<sup>1</sup> was formed to be proactive in defining the vision of worship for Prinsep. The document herein is the product, not an end but hopefully to embark us – leaders and congregation, on a pilgrimage of glorifying God by enjoying Him forever!

The leadership has taken the initiative in leading, setting the direction for worship in Prinsep. What is your responsibility as a worshipper (member)? Three things you can do. They are progressive, building upon one another – READ, REFLECT, and RESPOND. Keep the document close at hand, perhaps in your Bible, always ready to respond to the challenge of worshipping God faithfully, passionately and excellently, not only as individuals but as a community @ PSPC!

Pastor Peter Chan  
On behalf of the Worship Task Force

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<sup>1</sup> The Committee comprised the Pastors, Elder Koh Eng Soo, Elder Yang Soo Suan, Elder Dr Alex Lee, and Elder Jack Lum.

## Worship Is Our Ultimate Priority

At PSPC, we believe worship as our supreme priority because of:

- Our CALLING
- Our CONFESSION

We believe that the worship of God (the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit) is our **CALLING**. Worship defines our *being* and *belonging*. The Church is first and foremost a worshipping community (Exodus 4:23a; 1 Peter 2:9,10)! The only thing that distinguishes the Church from all other social institutions and organisations is that she *belongs* to God and that He is in her midst (Exodus 33:15,16). Worship also expresses our *being* and *sense of belonging*, which constitute the essence of the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:10-12) – that He be our God and we be His people!

We also believe that worship should be motivated by our **CONFESSION** of faith. In other words, we seek to worship passionately because of...

- **THE PERSON OF GOD**

That God, *being* God, is most worthy to receive our adoration and reverence (Psalm 18:3; 48:1; 96:4; 145:3 Revelation 4:11; 5:12). If there be only one reason why we worship, it would be because God is God!

- **THE PURPOSE OF GOD**

That God, *doing the work* of God (shaping, sustaining and saving) has the **SOLE PURPOSE** of promoting His glory, namely doing **EVERYTHING** in accordance to His purpose and pleasure (Ephesians 1:4-5,11-12; Revelation 15:3-4)! Worship is for God's sake, not for our own comfort or pleasure!

- **THE PASSION OF GOD**

That God is intensely passionate about pursuing His own purpose and pleasure, i.e. His glory (Isaiah 48:9-11). He pursues His purpose with intensity and immensity – that is with great zeal (Isaiah 9:7; 37:32; 42:13; Ezekiel 36:5; 38:19) and jealousy (Exodus 20:5, 34:14). Jesus the Man, being our example par excellence, teaches by life and example, that our worship of God should be characterised by purity (John 4:34) and passion (John 2:17).

- **THE PASSION OF HUMANITY**

That humanity's greatest passion is to be satisfied because...

- We are created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-28) to glorify God (Isaiah 43:7) by enjoying Him (Psalm 73:25).
- We are created with the capacity to worship, either God or something/someone else (Romans 1:20-23), and we can only rest (have peace) when we worship God (Romans 5:1). In other words, every human being is always at worship; the critical question is to and for whom is the worship offered!

Though we believe that worship is TO and FOR God, nevertheless His people should desire and delight in worshipping Him (Psalm 37:4; 43:4; 119:16,24,35,47,70,77,92,143).

## **Worship Is Both An Event And A Life Process**

We believe that worship is not *just* an event (Sunday service or otherwise), but a process as well, which involves life as a whole (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:1-21; Romans 12:1-2). NEVERTHELESS, we believe that worship services (Sundays or otherwise) are means of grace by which we exercise our spiritual senses in a given time slot and space (Deuteronomy 16:16,17), together with members of the community...

- To QUICKEN the CONSCIENCE by the holiness of God (Nehemiah 8:9; Acts 2:37);
- To FEED the MIND with the truth of God (Nehemiah 8:2-3,7-9; Acts 17:2,11; 1 Peter 2:2);
- To PURGE the IMAGINATION by the beauty of God (Psalm 27:4; 2 Corinthians 10:5);
- To OPEN the HEART to the love of God (Psalm 36:5,6; Ephesians 3:17b-19); and
- To DEVOTE the WILL to the purpose of God (Isaiah 6:8; Romans 8:28-30).

## **Worship Rests on Scripture And Is Enriched by Reformed Tradition**

We believe that worship services conducted in the church, being communal in nature, should be intelligible (1 Corinthians 14:8-10,19) and orderly (1 Corinthians 14:40).

- Being intelligible, it means the meaning and intent of the acts of worship are discernable and understood by the worshippers; as such, the worshippers are edified or built up (1 Corinthians 14:17) through their participation in the worship service.
- Orderliness in worship implies propriety. The conduct of God's people in worship must have respect for decency and discipline; otherwise, the worship service is indistinguishable from that of the conduct at rock concerts and techno parties. Biblical worship is characterised by both strident celebration (Psalm 66:1; 95:1; 100:1) and silent contemplation (Psalm 37:7; 46:10; Habakkuk 2:20; Zechariah 2:13).

We believe that the Reformed tradition provides a model of intelligibility and orderliness in the worship of God in the assembly of His people. Underlying the Reformed Tradition, worship is analogous to that of a king's court; therefore, everything in our worship service must be directed to God ultimately. Worship in the Reformed Tradition consists of the four movements – Gathering, The Word, Our Response and Sending. The movements provide a continuous flow of entering into God's empowering presence, so that the worshipping community may be sent off into the world to serve God. These movements are best illustrated in the commissioning of the prophet Isaiah in 6:1-8.

## GATHERING (CENTERING)<sup>2</sup>

This movement of the worship service seeks to aid the worshippers to focus centering on God. This part of the worship service consists of a triad – misery, deliverance and thankfulness.

- It begins with the **CALL TO WORSHIP** (usually by reading from Scriptures) – drawing people’s attention to the presence and perfections of God, and the purpose of the gathering, namely to worship God.
- After the opening hymn/song, there should be an **INVOCATION PRAYER**. It is a prayer calling upon God to manifest His glorious presence and to receive our praise and adoration. Admitting our weakness and propensity to sin even in worship, the prayer includes a plea with God to aid His people to worship aright! Since worship is directed to God, it is only right that God be asked to help us to worship Him in a manner that *pleases* and *glorifies* Him!
- It is very appropriate to end the Invocation Prayer with the singing of the **GLORIA PATRI**. Though the Gloria Patri literally means glory to the Father, it is nevertheless a praise rendered to the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There is a danger in today’s worship where the Godhead is being divided in our focus. Some worship services focus only on the Son while others on the Holy Spirit. As a side commentary, it is necessary to say that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity marks Christianity from the other two world monotheistic religions – namely Judaism and Islam.
- When there is a focus on God’s majesty and holiness the Holy Spirit will prompt the worshipping community to go into a time of **CONFESSION OF SINS**. Since it is a corporate worship, the confession of sins, whether it is printed or prayed by the worship leader, must be of general and communal in nature. There is a place for personal guilt in public worship but only in silent prayers. Perhaps, a time of **SILENCE** would then be necessary for personal confession of sins before the worshippers join in the corporate confession of sins.
- God’s mercy should not be presumed and neither should it be doubted. As an act of humility and penitence, the worshipping community should recite or sing “Lord, have mercy on us”, which is commonly known as the **KYRIE-ELEISON**. God’s mercy cannot be presumed for the simple reason that it is God’s sovereign act to dispense mercy (Exodus 33:19; Romans 9:15). There are many biblical examples of the need for humility and penitence in the confession of sins (Psalm 51:1; 57:1; 86:3; 123:3; Matthew 9:27; 15:22; 17:15; 20:30; Luke 18:13,38,39).
- As an attempt to clear any doubt in the minds and hearts of the worshippers, there should be an assurance of **FORGIVENESS OF SINS**. Scriptures should be quoted to assure those who have truly confessed their sins that they are forgiven, individually and corporately. (It must be clear to the congregation that the forgiveness of sins has nothing to do with absolution in the Roman Catholic Church or the mediation of the saints or any form of indulgence.)

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Eugene H. Peterson writes in *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John & the Praying Imagination*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1988, p.60: “In worship God gathers his people to himself as center....Worship is a meeting at the center so that our lives are centered in God and not live eccentrically. We worship so that we live in response to and from this center, the living God.... If there is no center, there is no circumference. People who do not worship are swept into a vast restlessness, epidemic in the world, with no steady direction and no sustaining purpose.”

- **THE WORD**

When the minds and hearts of the worshipping community have been set right before God, the worshippers are now ready to hear what He has to say to them through the **RESPONSIVE READING, SCRIPTURE READING, and SERMON**. The sermon must be based on Scriptures and expository. There should be a systematic exposition of the whole Bible over time so as to ensure the whole counsel of God is being taught to the congregation. Haphazard topical preaching should not be the staple spiritual food for the congregation in worship.

Regularly (usually monthly) the **SACRAMENTS** (baptism and holy communion) are administered as an integral part of the worship service. The reason for the **SACRAMENTS** to be part of **THE WORD** movement is that both are inseparable. The Word gives meaning and the celebration of the sacraments can only be understood from Scriptures. The sacraments should not be administered in a hasty and truncated manner. Instead, the sacraments ought to be administered in a worthy manner, edifying the congregation.

- **OUR RESPONSE**

This movement concerns **OUR RESPONSE** to the Word of God that has been preached. Part of **OUR RESPONSE** to the Word may take the form of **OFFERING, PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING, and DOXOLOGY**.

A very important form of response is **INTERCESSION & SUPPLICATION** or **PASTORAL PRAYER**. Here, the pastor or worship leader leads the congregation in praying for the needs of the church, the congregation, and the world.

- **SENDING**

Like the prophet Isaiah, having seen and heard what God has been doing and saying in the worship service, the worshipping community is ready to be sent into the world to serve God. The **SENDING** includes the **CHARGE AND BLESSING** and/or **CHORAL BENEDICTION**. The **THREEFOLD AMEN** should be included as a pattern set in the heavenly worship where the four living creatures said “Amen” and the elders fell down and worshipped (Revelation 5:14). Worship is affirming – God says “yes” to us and we respond to His “yes” by saying “yes” (Isaiah 6:8).

We believe, from Scriptures and the Reformed Tradition, the primacy of the Word in our worship of God. It is only in and through the Word that we know and understand the Person and Purpose of God. Also, from Scriptures we are awed by the worth and works of God. What then, do we mean by the primacy of the Word in our worship of God? There are two implications:

- **Time-slot**

There is no compromise on the time allocation in the worship service for the preaching of the Word, namely 25 to 30 minutes.

➤ **Theological Soundness**

- Of the Sermon
- Of the Songs Sung
- Of the Supplications (Prayers) Offered

***Worship Inspires Music and the Arts***

We believe music is a very important means of grace by which we worship God. We are exhorted by Scriptures to offer to God a variety of music – hymns, psalms and spiritual songs (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Also, we are instructed to praise God with a variety of instruments (Psalm 33:2; 71:22; 150:4,5).

We believe that music in the church needs careful selection in accordance with the purpose and circumstances of the service. There is music for worship, fellowship and evangelism – each serving a distinct purpose in the church.

We believe that music used in worship must be rendered to God as an offering; as such, there is no place for a selfish display of skills in leadership, musical wizardry or vocal versatility. Solo “performances”, whether vocal or instrumental, must only be allowed in the worship service as a testimony to God’s greatness and goodness!

We believe that the Worship Leader (WL) plays the role of a conductor, leading the musicians, choir/singers and congregation with ONE VOICE to worship God. Therefore, it is important that the WL leads with authenticity and integrity, that he/she leads a life of worship.

We believe that the congregation is the ultimate choir in the worship service. Hymns, psalms and spiritual songs selected must be pitched to the vocal and musical ability of the congregation. Nevertheless, in order to broaden and deepen our experience of God in worship, the congregation’s vocal range and repertoire of songs must be *carefully* stretched and developed.

We believe that the Choir/Cantor/Singers play a crucial role in helping the congregation in singing praise to God. In order not to turn the worshippers into spectators, they are to ensure that their voice should not overpower that of the congregation’s.

We believe that WL, choir and musicians must see themselves as partners with the Pastors in nurturing the congregation in worship. Together with the Pastors, they have a prophetic (teaching) responsibility in worship. This means that they must seek to engage the congregation intellectually, emotionally and volitionally with biblical truths contained in the lyrics of the songs sung.

We believe in the value of singing as a discipline in the Christian life. There are five values of singing in the life of the individual and the community:

- Through singing, Christians express their shared feelings and ideas.
- Through singing, Christians can tell others what they believe.
- Through singing, Christians are bound in closer fellowship.



- Through singing, Christians are instructed in the fundamentals of their faith.
- Through singing, Christians are sustained in daily life.

### ***Worship is both informing and the forming of Christian Character***

We believe that the worship of God, being a form of spiritual discipline, is vital to the shaping of the Christian character in the life of the individual and community. The following are the vital marks of the Christian characters:

- Humility/Teachability (Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Peter 5:6; James 4:6)
- Gratitude (Colossians 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Hebrews 12:28)
- Service (Matthew 5:13-16; Mark 10:45; John 13:1-17; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Galatians 5:13).

### ***Worship Builds Community***

Is it a blessing if there were uniformity in the form and style of worship throughout the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ? Did not Paul stress the beauty and importance of unity in diversity, rather than uniformity or conformity (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:12-31)? Where there is diversity, there is a need for love and acceptance. And the greater the diversity, the need for love and acceptance! In his classic passage Romans 14:1-15:13 (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:1-13) Paul exhorts both the weak and the strong to love and accept each other despite their differences. Though “concessions” or “compromises” should be made in matters of conscience and convictions, the longer term solution to the tension between the strong and the weak is to teach everyone in the congregation to be strong – “*One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.*” (Romans 14:5).

We believe that Paul’s exhortation to the Strong and the Weak in Romans 14-15 and 1 Corinthians 8 has a guiding principle outlined as follows:

- Weigh whether the matter is of primary importance or is it peripheral.
- Exhort the *strong* to concede to the *weak* because of their weak conscience.
- Instruct the *weak* to strengthen their conscience and thereby maintain unity in the church to the praise of God.

We believe in diversity of form and styles when it comes to the worship of God because it has nothing to do with our spirituality but tastes, preferences, and personality predisposition. Therefore, currently, we have three worship services each with a different liturgy.

- The 8.00 a.m. worship service, being the earliest worship service on Sundays, is notable for being simple and concise. The ambience and acoustics of the worship service is enhanced by the architecture of the Sanctuary.
- The 8.45 a.m. worship service, seeking to be relevant to the contemporary culture, is a blended worship service where hymns and choruses are being sung alongside.

Contemporary instruments (e.g., acoustic guitars, synthesizers, and drums) are used to accompany congregational singing. Though worship liturgy is planned and printed, nevertheless a fair measure of flexibility is allowed for the creativity of worship leaders. Once a month, on Communion Sundays, a group of singers (The Believers) render contemporary anthems in the worship service.

- The 11.00 a.m. worship service is a full liturgical worship basing on the Book of Common Worship published by the PC USA. The liturgy and selection of hymns and songs are carefully selected by the Pastors or assigned person(s) ahead of time basing on the Scripture Readings and sermons. The worship service, especially congregational singing, is enriched by the presence and participation of the Church Choir. The Church Choir renders the Introit, Anthem (only on Communion Sundays), and Choral Benediction. The ambience and acoustics of the worship service is enhanced by the architecture of the Sanctuary. Also, the music in the worship service is enriched by the organ and grand piano. The singing of Psalms and spiritual songs (some ethnic in origin) has been introduced to broaden and deepen the worship experience of the congregation. Also, the music is enhanced further by the use of other musical instruments (e.g. recorder, guitar, conga drums, and xylophone), some of which are ethnic in origin.
- Liturgy for the Sacraments (Holy Communion and Baptism) is commonly used in all three services.

We believe in encouraging members to settle in one worship service regardless of the preacher or otherwise as an exercise of personal discipline. Nevertheless, in order to ensure unity in the church for the longer term, members are also encouraged to attend the other two worship services to broaden and deepen their worship experience.

### ***Worship Motivates Evangelism and Missions***

- **Familiar Motives**
  - Conscience – guilt-ridden
  - Command – duty-bound
  - Compulsion – indebtedness
- **Foremost Motive (Isaiah 6:1-8)**
  - A Vision of God’s Sovereignty
  - A Passion for God’s Glory

We believe that when the vision of the beauty and majesty of God is caught by the worshippers, they will develop a consuming passion to communicate His glory to the world. In other words, worship is the ground and the goal of our evangelistic and missions endeavour – turning people away from worthless idols to serve (i.e. worship) the true and living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

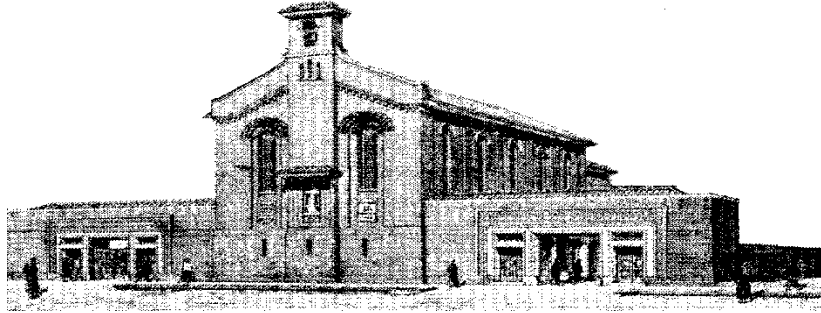
## ***Worship Points Us Heavenward***

We believe that every worship service should excite the individual and the community about the future prospect of worshipping God face-to-face (Revelation 7:11; 19:4).

We believe that our worship experience here on earth should be transcultural so as to enable us to catch a glimpse of the heavenly worship where peoples of different ethnicity and tongues gather before the throne of God to worship Him (Revelation 7:9).

We believe that when Christ comes to establish His kingdom, the new heaven and the new earth, the only enduring ministry of the Church is worship throughout eternity. This is the final reason why worship is our calling and ultimate priority!

Prepared by Pastor Peter Chan  
12<sup>th</sup> May 2001 (Saturday) – Revised



## **Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church**

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Email: [office@pspc.org.sg](mailto:office@pspc.org.sg)

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Sunday Services (only in English):

8.00 am – Multi-Purpose Hall (4<sup>th</sup> Level)

8:45 am & 11.00 am – Sanctuary (1<sup>st</sup> Level)

Sunday School – 8.45 am & 11.00 am

Youth Services – 11.00 am – Multi-Purpose Hall (4<sup>th</sup> level)

Holy Communion on Every 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of the Month