

Music & Worship Policy

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**Grace Bible Church
Wappingers Falls, NY**

PREFACE

This document contains the beliefs, thoughts and convictions of the Elders of Grace Bible Church on the topic of music and worship and our church. We trust that the reader will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit as he reads and deliberates on the material presented in this paper.

Except where God's Word speaks definitively, we have come to this study with an open mind to understand the principles of God's Word that may apply and to let the Holy Spirit guide us in our beliefs and decisions. We encourage the congregation to keep that same open mind and to conduct their own search of scriptures. Though we have our own likes and dislikes of various music styles and our own thoughts regarding worship, the final criteria for all of our beliefs and decisions is "*What does God's Word say about that?*" Nothing in this document should be contrary to God's Word. However, there are many decisions that must be made in a music ministry that the Scriptures do not directly address. We believe that the guidelines given in Chapters Two and Three will be an aid to those making decisions regarding appropriate music for Grace Bible Church services, ministries and gatherings.

We recognize that there is a real problem that has developed in some churches which music styles and tastes have become overly focused on, often to the neglect of true worship. We believe that the priority and primary focus is to be on the worship of God and on what God expects from each believer in worship. While music can be part of our worship, it is only a part of it and not the focus of it.

The purpose of this policy paper is to bring unity to this church in this sensitive area of music and worship. We also trust and pray that it will provide direction and guidance to all of us as we seek God's plan for Grace Bible Church in the areas of music and worship.

Chapter One

MUSIC AND WORSHIP STUDY

Background Information

Over the years there has been much discussion regarding music and its place in worship. This has been true of churches in America in general and true of Grace Bible Church in particular. While music has always played a part in the worship of God, as evidenced by the Psalms, it has been since the 1960's that it has increasingly become a source of division within the church. This is largely due to competing genres of music reflecting the styles that are popular within the culture at large which is then aggravated by the selfishness of those in the church who demand their particular style for the services. An additional element that has been added in the last couple of decades is the importance of music as a method of outreach within so called "seeker services." The emphasis is then placed on playing styles popular to secular culture as a means to make non-Christians more comfortable within a Christian worship service.

Over the years Grace Bible Church has had many visitors who have judged our worship service solely by the style of our music. We have also experienced contention and division in the past with individuals who insisted on having their particular style and philosophy dominate the worship service. In dealing with such contention it has been the desire of the Elders of Grace Bible Church to set forth a broad policy regarding music and worship in order bring understanding and unity within the congregation and dissuade those who would be contentious.

Much material has been gathered over the years. One particular resource was the *Music & Worship Policy* developed by Waukesha Bible Church, Waukesha, Wisconsin. They had developed their policy over the course of several years as they considered the employment of a Minister of Music & Worship. Much of the following policy has been taken from that document because it was carefully crafted, well written and expressive of our own convictions.

Chapter Two

CONGREGATIONAL WORSHIP SERVICES: MUSIC AND WORSHIP

Worship

Definition of Worship. We believe that individual worship is a concentrated expression of an individual's heart, soul, mind and body in response to the revelation of the Triune God whereby we declare His worth and work.

Purpose of Corporate Worship: Corporate worship is the gathering of Christians as a congregation for the purpose of worshipping God together. Corporate worship should reflect the unity of the body of Christ as, “*we are all members of one body.*” While individual worship may be as diverse as the personalities involved, corporate worship seeks a harmony and unity as we respond with “*one voice*” in honor and praise of our creator.

Scriptural Guidelines Regarding Worship:

- The singular audience in worship is the Lord Himself. (Revelation 5:11)
- The One who glorifies Christ through us is the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18b-20)
- The goal of all true worshipers is to glorify God. (Revelation 5:12-13)
- Worship of God involves: (Mark 12:30)
 - 1) Our passion because we love Him. (Praise)
 - 2) Our minds because we want to know Him better. (Edification)
 - 3) Our will because we want to obey Him more completely. (Obedience)
- Worship should be a way of life for each Christian. (Romans 12:1-2)
- God is a worship “seeker” and what He seeks are “true worshipers.” (John 4: 23-24)
- Music is a legitimate part of the worship of God and has Biblical guidelines
 - Job 38:7 - First record of a musical response to God & His work
 - Genesis 4:21 - First record of musical instruments being made and played
 - Job 36:24 - First record of people responding with music to God & His work
 - Exodus 15:1 - First record of God’s people responding with music to God & His work
 - The Book of Psalms - Lyrics of songs sung in worship of God. Includes notations on various musical instruments used in worship.
 - Ephesians 5:19 & Colossians 3:16 - Instructions to Christians on use of singing / music in the Christian life and the worship of God.
- Lyrics are to be examined for Biblical and theological soundness. While understanding that there is “poetic license” in expressing ideas in the lyrics, such “license” should not cause confusion and must not contradict the Statement of Faith of Grace Bible Church. It is acceptable to rewrite the lyrics to remove confusion and / or make it Biblically and theologically sound.

Responsibilities of the Music Director

Article VI, Section L of the Grace Bible Church Constitution states the following concerning the Music Director:

A Director of Music may be appointed by the Elders subject to congregational confirmation. The Director will serve a one-year term, starting upon confirmation at the annual corporate business meeting, and may serve multiple terms. The Director shall appoint a Music Committee consisting of members or associate members of the church, and meet regularly with them for the purpose of establishing and maintaining the music program, including selection of music, musicians and song leaders for church worship services. The Director shall work in harmony with the Senior Pastor and will be responsible to the Elders. He may be removed from office at any time by majority vote of the Elders and replaced with a temporary Director, subject to congregational approval at a corporate business meeting. This position may be replaced by an Associate Pastor.

According to the Grace Bible Church Constitution, the Pastor has *“ultimate responsibility for the leadership and spiritual ministry of the church”* and is *“an ex-officio member of all church committees.”* The Music Director works in harmony with the Pastor by striving to use music to enhance the teaching and spiritual ministry of the pastor to the congregation especially in corporate worship. The Music Director is to keep the Pastor informed about the music ministry of the church and should discuss with him any issues that arise as a source of counsel and direction.

Congregational Worship Service

- 1. Purpose:** To assist the believer to individually and corporately worship God through praise, edification and obedience. We believe God is the “seeker” of the true worshiper and that we enter into His presence in numerous ways including prayer, music, testimonies, and Bible teaching.
- 2. Strategy:** We do not believe that planning for the Congregational Worship Service should be driven by strategies exclusively designed to make the non-believer “comfortable.” We believe it is appropriate to plan other occasions that are “seeker sensitive.” Those other occasions need not be construed as “worship,” in that the non-believer is incapable of worshipping the true God because he does not know Him.
- 3. Evangelism:** We believe that all preaching is inherently evangelistic in that it is the presentation of the truth of God. We also recognize that on occasion the Congregational Worship Service will be more focused on evangelism in that the message will center on the good news of the claims of Jesus Christ and His promise to save those who believe in Him from their sin, and non-believers will be specifically challenged to place their trust in Christ.
- 4. Participants:** All who participate in leading the congregation in worship should know the Lord and be serving in the spirit, not the flesh. The goal is worship and not performance. When someone draws attention to himself, not God, he becomes a performer, and that is contrary to true worship. Our prayer is that every believer in the congregation comes prepared to participate in worship rather than to just observe. The participation of members and non-members will be according to the GBC Ministry Involvement Policy.
- 5. Acceptable Elements:** The leaders of Grace Bible Church believe that there is more than one style of worship format acceptable in the Congregational Worship. A worship format is simply how the basic elements of corporate worship are organized to fit together. The basic

elements of corporate worship may include some or all of the following: Prelude, Call to Worship, Scripture reading, Invitation, Audible prayer, Silent prayer, Offering (and offertory), Postlude, Sermon, Ministry Reports, Praise, Thanksgiving, Quiet meditation, Confession, Lord's Table, Baptism, Choral Anthem, Special Music, Testimony, Appropriate Announcements, Drama and possibly others. We believe that those who plan morning worship must have the freedom to select and arrange these elements as appropriate. The purpose is to enhance the teaching goals and basic themes of the scriptures being presented. What is commonly construed as our "order of worship" must remain flexible to accommodate the instruction and worship goals as the Spirit leads.

About Authorship & Copyright: Our primary concern is that song lyrics are Biblically and theologically sound. Secondary to that is the style of music being appropriate for the setting of worship and its purpose of use. It is recognized that a theologically sound and musically appropriate song may be written by a songwriter that may be or become theologically unsound or even heretical or have copyright owned by a group that is theologically unsound or heretical. Each song is to be evaluated upon its own merits. If the Elders or music director determine that a songwriter or copyright holder poses a danger to the immature, caution should be exercised, alternatives considered, and appropriate warning included with the displayed copyright information. Financial gain for using a good song by an unsound or heretical songwriter or copyright holder is both too small and too complex to be a consideration addressed in this policy.

About Drama: We believe that Jesus' use of parables indicates that the use of drama in edification is certainly acceptable and therefore a part of worship. (A parable is a word picture that serves to bring understanding concerning one main point). We would encourage the use of drama to introduce or emphasize a major teaching in the corporate worship. We envision drama utilizing minimal sets and costumes. The emphasis is on its use as a tool to accentuate a major point of teaching. Caution must be exercised that it neither draws attention away from the message, for it would then fail in its purpose, nor to draw attention to the participants, for it would then become a performance instead of worship.

About Dancing: Dancing as part of the worship of God is found in many places in the Scriptures (Exodus 15:20; 2 Samuel 6:14-16; Psalm 30:11; 149:3; 150:4; Ecclesiastes 3:4) and since there is no prohibition on it in the New Testament we believe it can still be a legitimate part of worship today. However, caution must be exercised since dancing can also be very worldly in form and function. Dancing as part of worship may be allowed at Grace Bible Church under the following parameters:

- * It must have a godly focus and not be mere entertainment.
- * It must be modest in dress, style, movements and choreography.
- * The music used must meet the policy requirements of the church
- * All dances are to be reviewed by the Senior Pastor or his delegate for approval before it can be scheduled into any worship service. Dances in other ministries must have prior approval by the leader of that ministry. Final decisions are reserved to the Elders of the church.
- * Spontaneous dancing will not be allowed in any worship service or ministry of GBC.

About Dress: While style and manner of dress may vary with the particular ministry and its setting, immodest dress is never acceptable (see *Modesty for Women* and *Modesty for Men* guidelines). Our purpose is to help people focus on God and any manner of dress that calls attention to an individual distracts from that purpose. Therefore those that participate in any ministry from the platform on any regular Sunday worship service or any special congregational worship service must meet the following minimum standards.

- * Clothing must be modest in appearance (as above). (1 Timothy 2:9).
- * Style must befit godliness and humility (1 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 3:3-4; 1 Cor. 11:10)
- * Appearance should be reflective of the reverence due God and therefore neat, orderly, and well groomed and never sloppy, disheveled, or unkempt.
- * Those with specific questions about the above should talk with their ministry leader, an Elder, Deacon or Deaconess as appropriate.
- * Beyond the general requirements, the particular requirements for any specific ministry are to be determined by the leader of that ministry.

6. Music: We believe that a variety of music styles are acceptable in the Congregational Worship Service. We also believe that all music should be in good taste and quality and be honoring and glorifying to the Lord. It should reflect the musician's best effort to honor the Lord. Music within the church has a role in the teaching and admonition within the congregation and giving thanks unto God (Col. 3:16).

a. Instrumentation and Music

While some have a comfort level with only certain "traditional" instruments such as the organ and piano as the principle instruments of worship music, we find that the Scriptures allow and even encourage a wide variety of instruments in public worship. All forms of musical instruments are acceptable for worship services provided they are played appropriately to enhance the message being presented. All manners of styles that overpower, confuse or otherwise make it difficult to understand the message will be discouraged and may be banned. Excessively loud sounds will not be tolerated since they are a source of physical irritation and even hearing damage (greater than 90 decibels sustained, and greater than 103 decibel peaks).

We encourage the use of a wide variety of vocal and instrumental soloists and groups under these guiding principles of quality, good taste and honoring to the Lord in the ministries of assisting congregational singing, presentation of music to glorify God and music to encourage and edify the congregation.

b. Types of Music Regularly Sung by the Congregation.

- 1) Traditional Hymns: These include hymns and compositions which teach Biblical doctrine and theology such as; "*Holy, Holy, Holy,*" and "*Christ the Lord is Risen Today,*" as well as hymns of traditional European Protestantism by composers such as Bach, Charles Wesley, Martin Luther, etc.
- 2) Popular 19th and 20th Century "Gospel Music." These are songs associated with American Revivalism and are well loved by many. They include composers such as: Ira Sankey, Fanny Crosby, and John W. Peterson and songs such as "*Faith is the Victory,*" "*To God Be the Glory,*" and "*Surely Goodness and Mercy,*"
- 3) Contemporary Praise and Worship Music: We strive to use many of the scripturally and theologically true "Praise and Worship" songs. These include songs such as "*As*

- the Deer,” “Awesome God,” “Lord, I Lift Your Name On High,” “God of Wonders” and “The Heart of Worship.”*
- 4) Modern hymns that convey biblical doctrine and theology currently being written by artists like Stuart Townend, Keith and Kristyn Getty and Sovereign Grace music.

c. Types of Music We Could Use More Exposure to:

- 1) Selections from great Classical Choral Works such as Handel's Messiah, Faure's Requiem, and Bach's B Minor.
- 2) Anthems from a variety of time periods, including contemporary.
- 3) Seasonal Choral Works.
- 4) We wish to see our congregation become familiar with new songs that communicate an accurate scriptural message.

We wish to see our congregation kept current with the best of the great music being composed, whether it reflects a classical, popular or contemporary style. This will require people who are musically talented who can learn and present these works.

d. Tolerance of others' tastes:

We acknowledge that there are a variety of tastes, likes and dislikes in our congregation when it comes to worship and music styles. Music should be a way of creating unity instead of a cause for division. We will teach and seek to follow Paul's admonition *“in honor prefer one another”* (Romans 12:10). Those who cause dissension and division over music are subject to warning and correction, and even discipline should they continue to be contentious and divisive (Romans 16:17,18; 1 Corinthians 1:10-11; Titus 3:10,11; Matthew 18:15-17).

- 7. Accountability:** We believe the Congregational Worship Service is the most visible indication of the people and nature of Grace Bible Church. For many people this is their only exposure to GBC. We also believe it is the best occasion for our corporate worship. It is our desire to give our best to honor and glorify our wonderful Lord during every service. We expect the Senior Pastor to oversee all aspects of the worship services. He may delegate some of this authority and responsibility to others, but he is responsible to the Elders for all that occurs during the worship services. This is not to rule out spontaneity during the service, but it is meant to say that there should be few, if any, surprises for the Senior Pastor. The decision of what is appropriate for Congregational Worship Services belongs to the Senior Pastor with any final decision reserved to the Elders of Grace Bible Church.

CHAPTER THREE

MUSIC IN GRACE BIBLE CHURCH MINISTRIES

(Other than Congregational Worship Services - i.e., Sunday A.M.)

We Believe:

1. All music should be in good taste, of appropriate quality, and never dishonoring to the Lord regardless of the group to whom it is ministering or the purpose of the ministry or event
2. The particular group being served and the intent of the ministry are key factors in determining the appropriateness of the specific music selected. We expect that the many varied ministries and age groups to which we minister will reflect a wide variety of types and styles of music.

3. What is appropriate music for a Congregational Worship Service may not be the best for other gatherings and ministry events.
4. What may be appropriate music for a particular gathering or ministry event might not be at all appropriate for a Congregational Worship Service.
5. All meetings of groups at Grace Bible Church need not be formal worship services. The music used in a particular group should be appropriate for that occasion.
6. Even though we discourage performance for performance sake in a worship service, we realize that performance has a genuine purpose in a church and are not discouraging all performance music at Grace Bible Church.
7. There are a variety of musical tastes within our congregation, therefore each of us must on occasion have tolerance for a type of music that we may not prefer.
8. The music we listen to in the privacy of our cars or homes may be perfectly acceptable to the Lord, but may not be appropriate when meeting with others. (Romans 14)
9. There is music that claims to be “Christian” but is “Christian” only in the secular, not Biblical sense of the word. Like other forms of heresy, it may never be used in any ministry connected with Grace Bible Church and we strongly advise it be avoided completely even for personal listening.
10. Psalms 150 suggests that all instruments can be acceptable in worship including brass, strings, winds and percussion.
11. We believe that God raises up gifted composers and lyricists in all generations.
12. The decision of what is appropriate is left to the ministry leader for the particular meeting subject to immediate review by the Elder overseeing that ministry with any final decision reserved to the Elders of Grace Bible Church

The diagram on the next page illustrates our beliefs on how music should be selected.

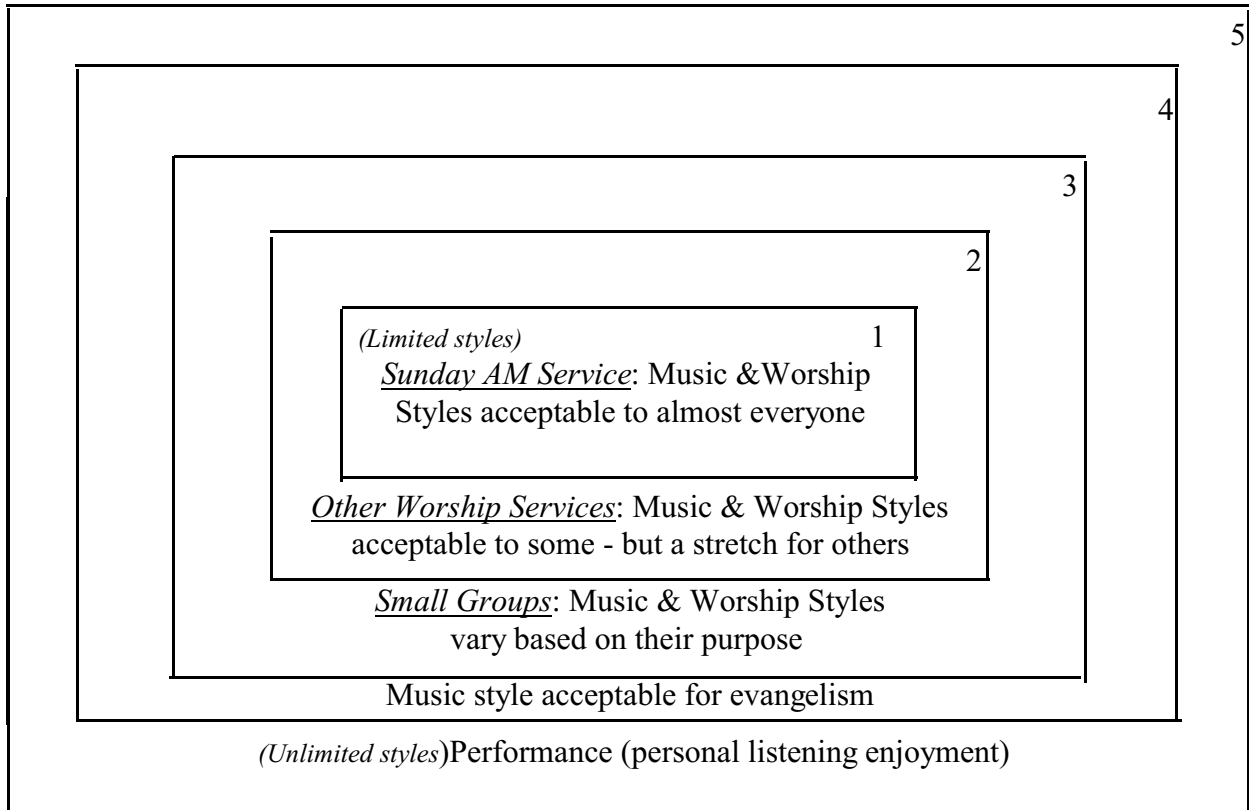
Variety of Worship and Music Styles Based on Ministry Activity and Audience

The illustration below represents all the people at Grace Bible Church. It demonstrates that each of us fit into one or more of these “Worship and Music Style Boxes” and that we move from one box to another as the occasion arises. For instance, music that is acceptable for youth at an outreach function (box #3 or box #4), may not be acceptable for the Sunday A.M. Service (box #1). Music we listen to in our car (box #5) also may not be appropriate for the Sunday A.M. Service.

Music that one person listens to (box #5) may be greatly disliked by another. This is a matter of taste. There may be occasions where you are in box #2 on a Sunday A.M. and you may be a little uncomfortable. But for someone else, they are in box #1 because they are very comfortable according to their musical taste. The next Sunday you might be in box #1 (comfortable) but the other person is now in box #2 (uncomfortable) because they do not like that style of music. Tolerance means that on occasion we may be uncomfortable while others are comfortable. No one can insist that everyone like their particular musical tastes.

The illustration below assumes that all the music used at Grace Bible Church will meet the established criteria on point 6 of the preceding page; “*all music should be in good taste, of good quality and honoring to the Lord, no matter what the service (gathering) it is in, to whom it is ministering, or the purpose of the ministry.*”

“*In honor preferring one another.*” Romans 12:10



Music & Worship Commitment

I have read the Grace Bible Church *Music & Worship Policy* and agree to abide by it.

I have read the Scriptural Guidelines and the verses referenced in them. I will strive to be obedient to them and follow their principles so that both my personal and corporate worship of God will be true and acceptable to Him.

I understand that the purpose of all worship is to declare the worth of the Lord God and bring Him glory, therefore its purpose and focus is on Him and never on pleasing myself or those listening to me.

I understand that corporate worship is to reflect the unity of the body of Christ in worship of God and therefore I will not let my personal taste in style and content be detrimental to that unity.

I understand that participating in leading the congregation in worship must be done in the spirit and not the flesh, therefore I will make sure that I have a God honoring attitude before any performance whether a solo or part of a team. If I cannot get my attitude right, I will humbly refrain from taking a part in leading and instead remain with the congregation while still striving to repent and regain a God honoring attitude. If I am in conflict with someone, I will strive diligently to be at peace with them so far as it depends on me (Matthew 5:23,24; Romans 12:8). If I have not done that I will refrain from taking part in leading until I do.

I will follow the policy guidelines concerning dress and grooming. If I realize or it is pointed out to me that I am not properly prepared, I will change and properly prepare or refrain from participating in leading in worship.

If I am playing a musical instrument, I will strive to use my performance to enhance the message being presented and never overpower it, confuse it or distract from it. I will follow the policy guideline and refrain from playing so loudly that it becomes a physical irritation to others

If I am singing I will strive to sing in such a way as to clearly communicate the lyrics of the song. I will further strive to make sure that the lyrics have a clear and God honoring message.

If I am performing drama or dance, I will follow the guidelines of this policy.

If I am part of a musical or worship team, ensemble or choir, I will humbly follow the directions of the leader.

If I am leading a music or worship team of any type, I will strive to lead with humility and grace, but I will also ensure that goal of true worship is kept in focus and that this policy is followed by all members of that team or group. I will further ensure that what is performed is appropriate to the particular ministry activity.

Name

Date