

Music & Worship at Immanuel Bible Church

*“Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”
(Colossians 3:16-17 NASB)*

A Brief Statement of Immanuel’s Philosophy of Worship

In the most general sense, worship is a believer’s entire life lived in obedience before God. But the Scriptures teach there is a more specific sense where worship refers to the corporate gathering of the church. When believers in Christ gather we glorify the Lord while also encouraging and teaching one another. Various means are used in our corporate worship to accomplish this goal including fellowship, Scripture reading, prayer, music, testimony, preaching, communion, and baptism. These are all ways for the congregation to exalt God for who He is and to remember and celebrate our new life in Christ through the ministry of the Spirit. Jesus specifically states in John 4:24 that true worshippers must worship God in spirit and in truth. True worshipers respond in a way in keeping *with* God’s character and actions, as a response to his character and actions, and this has the effect of *glorifying* his character and actions.

Convictions Regarding Music in Corporate Worship

Music is a means to GLORIFY GOD.

Music is not an end in itself, it is a means used to magnify the Triune God. Music is not the focus but a vehicle used to direct attention to the Lord. (Ps. 96:3, 4; Ps. 100:2)

Music is directed primarily to GOD

Our worship is reserved for God alone, and thus our musical expressions of worship are directed primarily to Him. But as believers praise and call out to the Lord, and truth from Scripture is proclaimed about God’s character and work of salvation, those gathered together in corporate worship also impact one another. (Deut. 6:13; Col. 3:16)

Musical texts should be founded on the WORD OF GOD

While not the sole textbook for songs, the Bible should be the foundation of our singing. Texts should be based upon and saturated with the Word of God and theologically correct. (Col. 3:16)

Music is a means to help others become MATURE followers of Christ.

Programs, rehearsals, and worship services should help everyone involved grow more mature in their faith, hope, and love. Whether serving specifically within the music ministry or part of the larger congregation, we all are to participate with gratitude and thankfulness in our hearts to the Lord. As we sing songs filled with theologically rich words and biblical themes, the congregation teaches and reminds each other about God and His ongoing influence in our lives. (Eph. 4:15-16; Eph. 5:19-20)

Music making is PARTICIPATORY

We sing to the Lord but also to one another. At times this is accomplished through those specially gifted or trained in music producing a higher level of excellence and beauty, whether solo, small groups, or choir, resulting in the greater congregation being built up in the faith. But the church as a whole should also participate in music as a group thus impacting one another and magnifying God with one voice. (1 Chr. 16:23; Col. 3:16)

Music within the church should strive for UNITY

We are commanded to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Music within the church should work toward unifying and not dividing the Body of Christ. This is why we have multiple services with a variety of music and do not have different services based upon particular styles of music. (Eph. 4:3)

Music affects the EMOTIONS

Music impacts the heart in a different way than the spoken word alone. Therefore, great responsibility must be taken not to influence or coerce people toward an end that is not God-honoring but instead point them toward Christ. (Isa. 5:12)

Music should be performed with EXCELLENCE

Music should be performed to the best of our ability, and the Lord gives talents and skills which should be used to bring honor to Him. The heart of the artist should be right before the Lord while he ministers to his highest capability, but excellence should not become the only lens through which we view the ministry or become an idol. (2 Chr. 34:12; Isa 29:13)

Music and texts should express VARIETY

Old Testament Psalms, hymns of praise to God, and songs that are of a spiritual nature show variety in the types of texts to be used in the church. A variety of instruments as well as vocal singing is also encouraged. (Ps. 150; Eph. 5:19)

Music should be both CURRENT and TIMELESS

Musical styles change constantly so music in the church should adopt current songs while continuing to value and use the best of all genres from all time periods. This will also aid those from all generations to make a musical connection so the words will impact their hearts. Music will also reflect the culture and geographical area where a church is located. At times, musical preference may need to be surrendered as we “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ps. 104:33; 1 Cor. 9:22; Eph. 5:21)

Music should be ACCESSIBLE

Songs sung by the congregation should be able to be sung by the common lay person. Musical range should not be too high or too low, and rhythms not overly complicated. While this may be different for each church, the goal should be to encourage participation from the majority of the congregation. (Ps. 149:1)

(This document was agreed upon by the Music and Worship Council on February 24, 2014)