

- Is your leadership diverse? Are different ages, genders, races, beliefs, views represented?
- What practices does your congregation have that ensure the health of your servant leadership? How are they practically supported? What do you do when someone is burned out?
- How does your church handle monopolized cliques of leadership?
- What spoken and unspoken expectations do you have for your pastor(s)?
- How does your church help members discern spiritual gifts? How are voices/ideas heard?
- How are people empowered and encouraged to serve?
- What does your church do if the wrong people are leading?



**Spirit-Inspired Worship** vs. *self-gratifying worship; stale ritual divorced of meaning; or consumer entertainment worship*

Spirit-Inspired worship is a gift of God's wonder! Six days we labor and toil, and on this Holy Sabbath day we get to come into the presence of God; we get to encounter the awesome mystery of the God who longs to be known in relationship with us. We worship, because through prayer and supplication, through the Word proclaimed and the sacraments celebrated, through the songs of praise and passing of peace — God meets us there. Worship is our lifeline to the Holy God. Our worship should be active participation into the living relationship with the triune God; thus, all should feel welcome and have a place. Worship should challenge, teach, transform, convict, and call us into deeper relationship with God and one another; not gratify our comforts and entertain our desires. Worship is an encounter with God that we understand and do not understand. It is an act filled with mystery and awe, but in worship we have the opportunity to express our deepest desires to God and listen for God's voice. In worship, we also experience the call to serve and be in mission.

**A. Biblical References:**

Isaiah 6:1–13; Isaiah 29:13; Hebrews 12:28–29; Luke 24:13–35; Exodus 3:1–6; Deuteronomy 12; Philippians 2:1–11; Hebrews 5:1–10; 1 Chronicles 16:7–36; Revelation 22:1–7; Matthew 21:12–17

**B. Objectives**

- Prayerful discernment of members actively participating in all aspects of planning and leading worship
- There is thoughtful and sound biblical preaching
- Intentional worship does not cling to rituals, but is open to filling sacred space with new rituals

- Engages all people, of all diversity, and enables them to be active participants in the experience
- Creates space for peoples' stories; not afraid of silence
- Communal connectivity to one another, and connection to God
- Challenges and sends the people of God beyond their pew into daily life
- There should be awe, expectation, and anticipation in coming into the presence of God

**C. Potential Outcomes:**

- Worship helps people deepen their relationship with God and nurtures faith
- Worship strengthens our communal ties as stories are shared and we intimately experience God
- Worship becomes an expression of relationships to God and to the household of God
- Worship opens us to experience the wonder God longs to reveal and wonder transforms our lives and ministry, never leaving us the same, but leading us to even deeper questions
- Worship enlivens us, emboldens us to be a people of God in our communities and our world
- Blessing of rich diversity as people share new rituals, traditions, ways of interpreting which challenge and enrich our wisdom in faith

**D. Reflection Questions:**

- What would you say are the fundamental principles to why you gather for worship?
- What would a visitor say about your worship?
- How does your congregation practice spirit-inspired worship — allowing space for lament, praise, confession, questions, wrestling contemplation with the Word?
- Is worship collaborative in your church? Are people of all ages/backgrounds included?
- Does your congregation explain, teach and educate people on the rituals and traditions?
- How does your worship challenge, ignite, educate and transform people?
- Does worship meet people where they are and allow for active participation? How do people share their stories?
- Name times when God's wonder was experienced in worship.
- How open is your congregation to change in worship? Do they seek new ways to ritualize the sacredness of worship, or do they hold on sacredly to their rituals and traditions?
- Do all cultures, races, languages, genders, ages, all diversity find a sacred place to worship? Is worship enriched by their unique traditions and styles?