

## **JICC: POSTION PAPER**

### **Why Do We Worship The Way That We Do On Sundays?**

We believe that the gathering of the church (which is the Greek word *ekklesia* - meaning "assembly") is the **assembly of believers**. The main purpose of the time is for those in the family of God to regularly meet to *devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer*<sup>1</sup>. While we gather as those who have been saved by God's grace, we also use this time to practice hospitality.<sup>2</sup> We recognize that we always have guests among us -- those whom we have personally invited, those who are seeking Christ, and those still far from Him. Our aim is not only for them to be seen and welcomed, but to see and hear a clear presentation of the gospel<sup>3</sup>, to say *truly God is among them*<sup>4</sup>, and to come to the personal saving knowledge of Christ<sup>5</sup>.

The public reading<sup>6</sup> of and **preaching of God's Word**<sup>7</sup> is primary and central in our meetings. It is our conviction that the main point of each teaching be both interpreted and supported by the Scriptures<sup>8</sup>. Because of this, we generally teach through specific portions of Scripture, entire books of the Bible, or on a focused topical series -- each with a desire to give the church family a broad and deep knowledge of God, His Word, and of what it means to be disciples of Jesus.

We are called to ***sing to one another songs, hymns, and spiritual songs***<sup>9</sup>. We sing songs both old and new -- choruses and hymns. Our singing reflects the diversity of expression found in the Psalms: songs that are cries and prayers<sup>10</sup>, songs of exaltation<sup>11</sup> and lament<sup>12</sup>, songs that tell the gospel story in descriptive ways<sup>13</sup> and songs that repeat words and phrases<sup>14</sup>. Sometimes we have an entire band, other times we just have one instrument and sometimes none at all. Our aim in every song is to be united with one voice in worship to God.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 2:42

<sup>2</sup> Hospitality literally means: to be a friend to strangers.

<sup>3</sup> John 13:35

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:25

<sup>5</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:2

<sup>6</sup> 1 Timothy 4:13

<sup>7</sup> Acts 6:2, Acts 15:35, 2 Timothy 4:1-2

<sup>8</sup> Often referred to as expository preaching

<sup>9</sup> Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16

<sup>10</sup> ie. Psalm 40, 69, 80

<sup>11</sup> ie. Psalm 24, 57, 96, 145

<sup>12</sup> ie. Psalm 6, 38, 130

<sup>13</sup> ie. Psalm 78, 107

<sup>14</sup> Psalm 118 and 136 (both have story and repetition), also Isaiah 6:3, Revelation 4:8, 5:13, 7:12

We weekly celebrate **the Lord's Supper** *when we come together*<sup>15</sup>. This reminds us of Christ's sacrificial love and our covenant relationship with him and with each other. All who are born again believers in Christ are free to celebrate at the table with us.

We believe that *when we come together* **each one** has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, **everyone should come prepared to contribute** so that all may be built up. Even though much of that participation happens in individual interactions -- words of encouragement<sup>17</sup>, testimonies<sup>18</sup>, hugs<sup>19</sup>, and prayers<sup>20</sup> -- some of these contributions are given to the entire church. These happen in both planned and spontaneous ways. While one does not have a higher value than the other, we do believe it is important to give space for both. With that understanding, we believe that the Sunday meeting is a place for the mature expression of the gifts. In those who lead in teaching, singing, praying, and sharing prophetic words, our aim is to put forward people whose practice of the gifts can be an example to others.

### **What do we mean by Sunday morning is the mature expression of the gifts?**

Because the church is a family, we want the culture of our church to feel like a family who has different generations of people at different stages of maturity. Our desire is to give people an opportunity to try, to learn, to fail, and to grow. We also want to model leaders who have been tested over time to be an example to others. This includes those who are teaching, leading songs or prayers, or those sharing prophetic words, tongues, or interpretations.

We also recognize that the size of the gathering brings with it different opportunities and challenges. Home groups provide an opportunity for people to grow in their gifts with more freedom than when the entire church is gathered. Therefore, while there will be times when people will bring a prophetic word, tongue, or interpretation to the entire congregation for the very first time, it will be more common for these public contributions to be given by those whose practice of the gifts has been tested in smaller environments first<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> In 1 Corinthians, the Apostle Paul uses the phrase "come together" seven times -- with six of them speaking of the church. Chapter 11 gives instructions on the Lord's Supper and 14:26 gives instructions on contributions.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Corinthians 14:26

<sup>17</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 1 Corinthians 14:3

<sup>18</sup> Revelation 12:11

<sup>19</sup> Romans 16:16 (While the Middle Eastern culture of the early church and many cultures today still greet with a kiss, generally Americans greet with a handshake or hug. And you should probably ask someone before you kiss them.)

<sup>20</sup> James 5:16

<sup>21</sup> This practice of prophecy would reflect the same practice we have in other areas such as teaching and leading worship. 1 Timothy 5:22, 4:15; 2 Timothy 1:6, 2:2