



<http://www.parbc.org>

Keystone **BAPTIST**

Official Paper of the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches



The Essentials for Public Worship in the Church

by Pastor Joshua Franklin
Open Door Baptist Church, Greensburg

The recent pandemic forced many churches to make changes to ministries and to modify church services. The liturgy (service order) of a church was upended due to covid mitigation efforts. Should these changes continue? Should we resume the order of service because that is how we always did things? Perhaps, this is an ideal moment to investigate the essentials for a church service.

Debate about worship services began during the reformation. Martin Luther embraced the “normative principle” which can be summarized as “whatever is not forbidden is allowed.” On the other end of the spectrum was Ulrich Zwingli who promoted the “regulative principle” of worship which can be summarized as “whatever is not commanded is forbidden.” The Reformed church argued worship must be regulated by Scripture. Their church services were plain and austere even lacking music.

Continued page 3



The Lion Who Does Heart Surgery

By Pastor Timothy G. Smith
Calvary Baptist Church, Bloomsburg, PA

The Old Testament prophets were experts at using metaphors to show what it means to “know the LORD.” Hosea features many striking metaphors, but is dominated by one that God called him to live out, a shattered marriage. He modeled the lesson that knowing God is like sympathizing with the pain of a husband severely wounded by a persistently unfaithful wife. Hosea draws us in to feel the pain of betrayal, then shows that we are the betrayers! Our hearts are diseased and congested with waywardness, so God



Continued page 6

Inside this Issue:

This Time of Year.....	Page 2
A Child...a Son...a Savior.....	Page 2
Churches Seeking a Pastor.....	Page 5
Upcoming Activities.....	Page 5
2022 Conference Dates.....	Page 5

EDITOR

Rev. Paul J. Connor

LAYOUT & DESIGN

Anita L. Fordyce

State Representative's Comments
Rev. Paul J. Connor



This Time of Year



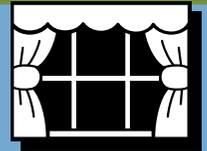
Have you noticed how fast time is flying by? I have! And, it is obvious that the older I get the faster time passes. I have heard others say that, but now I am realizing it. It seems like it was just yesterday it was the New Year and now I am getting ready for Thanksgiving and Christmas!

As we wind-down from the pandemic shut-downs and return to more normal activities in our churches, there is a renewed awareness of the value of each day and especially of each Sunday with the privilege and freedom to worship and fellowship with fellow believers.

Each day comes and then it is gone. There comes with each and every day a responsibility for those of us that are born again to walk in wisdom, (the truth of the Word of God and knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ) making an utmost effort to live each moment, each hour, each day as to honor our Lord. Scripture charges us to **redeem** the time. **Ephesians 5:16** "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." And then in **Colossians 4:5** "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, **redeeming the time.**"

Continued page 8

From the Parsonage Window



A CHILD...A SON...A SAVIOR

by Anita L. Fordyce
Hope Baptist Church, Hanover, PA

The birth was over. He was minutes old. Even though trembling from shock and exhaustion, His mother tenderly washed Him and wrapped His tiny body in what was called swaddling clothes, the garb of newborns.

She pried open His hands and counted five little fingers. He drew them back to His chest in protest. She straightened his leg and held out a tiny foot to look at His toes. Again, He protested the exposure by drawing up His knees, assuming a familiar fetal position. She lifted Him up to her face and touched His cheek. His skin was so soft. She listened to His steady breathing. She knew He was perfect.

Her husband had helped her through the birth as best he could. Earlier this evening when they had arrived in Bethlehem, there was no room in the inn. The only shelter he could find was in a stable an inn keeper had offered where he made her a bed of dry clean straw. Now, gratefully, with the baby in her arms, she lay down in the straw and let it envelop them. Its smell was comforting—one of the room's pleasant aromas.

Her husband moved behind her and took a cow out of its stall and filled its feed box with more of the straw. He suggested that she might lay the baby in the box so she could rest, but she wasn't ready to part with Him yet. She wrapped Him in a blanket and pulled it back to look again at His face. Cra-

Continued page 8

Perhaps a better way of identifying how we should worship on Sundays is to say “Scripture should regulate what we do in worship whether explicitly or in principle.” The Scriptures do not prescribe an order of service. However, it does reveal the essential components of a divinely ordered service that will be grouped into five categories.

1. Preparing for Worship. This first category may be one that is easily overlooked because it is more of a prerequisite to worship. Ecclesiastes 5:1-3 calls the worshiper to avoid casually approaching the Lord without adequate preparation. One commentary notes that *keep your foot* “refers to demeanor and preparedness as one comes to worship, particularly readiness to obey, for listen refers to heeding as well as hearing.” What is the danger of unprepared worship? Regardless of one’s good intentions, thoughtless and unprepared worship is a foolish sacrifice. How do we avoid the sacrifice of fools? According to verse 1, we must listen. We must prepare to hear and obey God’s Word. Sunday should be the highlight of the week. Instead of “I have to go to church” attitude, we should be saying “I get to go to church.” That was the psalmist attitude when he said, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord (Psalm 122:1).”

Additionally, we must prepare ourselves when we arrive to worship. Ecclesiastes 5:2 adds a warning against hasty words “before God.” When the worshiper arrives at the place of worship, he still needs to prepare his heart to hear God’s Word. We have many things that can distract us before the service begins. The remedy in verse 2 is to direct our thoughts upward about God. God in Heaven reminds us of His majesty and glory.

One component to consider including in the service is an Invocation of the Lord. The worship service could begin with prayer asking God’s presence for help or aid. After reading of a couple verses, a pastor can pause for a short time of silent prayer. After a few moments, he can lead the church in prayer to seek God’s help to worship. We do not naturally enter God’s presence with a pure heart. It is important that we prepare our hearts to worship the Lord because God requires it (Ps. 24:3-4).

2. Praising in Worshipful Singing. While singing is not debated in the church, how and what to sing is. The disagreements on music have given the music ministry the reputation as the “war department” of the church. Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 reveal that singing is a natural response for a Word-filled, Spirit-led believer. We do not need to create an atmosphere to enhance singing. We should not depend upon special lighting or loud speakers that drown out everyone. When a person’s heart is affected by spiritual truth, it reacts in joyful song. Further, singing to the Lord is composed of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. We show concern about the content of our songs by choosing ones with theological depth in their words. In my humble opinion, the tune of a song is also important (1 Cor. 14:8). Churches should avoid musical forms that are distracting, unsuitable, or degenerate. If there is music that brings glory to God, then there is worldly music that is degenerate. A tune is a language and communicates certain emotions. Hollywood movies are dependent on the ability to arouse happiness vs. fear with music. Jurassic Park wouldn’t be so scary if the music score was from Mary Poppins. We should wed hymn texts with musical tunes that communicate the majesty and glory of

God in our worship. The holiness of God is not communicated if the organist plays music from baseball games. A holy God does not want worship to be “profane” or common (Ezek. 22:26). The passage ends with our singing “to the Lord” not to please people. Throughout Scripture, individual solos up to large choirs sing praise to God. It is perfectly fine to have these in the worship service as long as it isn’t for showcasing talent or creating a concert atmosphere. Our sole objective should be to bring glory to God, not entertain people. When we sing, we have an audience of One.

3. Praying as Worship. There is no doubt that prayer is important in the Christian’s life. Prayer is a vital vehicle for worshiping God in private and in public. Public prayer during the service helps to foster a spirit of genuine worship. What should the congregation be doing while the pastor is leading in prayer? Instead of the congregation just listening to the prayer, another option is to encourage each individual in the congregation to follow carefully and pray his prayer along with him. In Matthew 18:19–20, Christ clearly commends public prayer, even for the smallest churches. If at least two or three participate together, He guarantees success. The requirement, though, is that they must “agree” with each other. This means that everyone should pay attention and consciously consent to what the pastor is praying. Worshipers are participants, not spectators. The promise is that God will answer that prayer.

4. Presenting Offerings in Worship. 1 Corinthians 16:1–2 teaches that our giving should be planned and systematic. Paul told the Corinthians to give “upon the first day of the week.” Second, he said that “every one of you” should do this. All who claim to be believers are to express their stewardship of God’s money this way. Third, he says that each is to give “as God hath prospered him” or “in keeping with one’s income.” We should not look at the tithe as a ceiling of giving that you stop at, but a floor to move from. Furthermore, Paul presents giving as an act of worship (Phil. 4:18). Paul compared the money sent by the Philippians to an Old Testament sacrifice people gave in worship to God. He called their gifts of money “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.” When we give to the work of God, we are participating in an act of worship. Do you view giving as an act of worship? Deuteronomy 16:16–17 presents an interesting command: worshipers “shall not appear before the Lord empty.” Combined, these passages provide caveats to online giving. We should not treat giving like paying a bill, just set it and forget it. Giving is much more than a duty or an obligation, it is an act of worshiping the Lord.

5. Preaching and Reading Scripture for Worship. Many churches have created an order of service that allows a non-worship element to dominate their service. The common trend is to replace the pulpit with a stool and have the pastor offer an informal “talk” or “chat” instead of a sermon. Two passages direct the church to make God’s Word front and center during the worship service. 1 Timothy 4:13 teaches the importance of hearing God’s Word. The word “attendance” could be rendered “attention.” Anyone who leads in worship must focus “attention” on reading God’s Word during the worship service. At the very least this should be done when the Pastor reads the text before the message. However, the early church included the reading of God’s Word aloud during their services. Consider including an accurate, purposeful reading

Churches Searching for Pastor

As of November 2021



First Baptist Church – Corry
 Grace Baptist Church – Hazleton
 First Baptist Church – Roulette
 Carmel Baptist Church – Saegertown
 Tidioute Baptist Church – Tidioute
 Faith Baptist Church - Waynesburg
 Calvary Baptist Church – Union City

Next Town Evangelism – Faith Baptist Church, Bradford

Pray for Pastor Gary Smith as he is in need of PARBC Churches supporting him and thus be able to receive matching funds from the PARBC for his support in his effort to rescue/build back up FBC, especially with the difficulties of the pandemic.

Coming Activities for Our Fellowship

Youth Retreat and Talents for Christ

Calvary Baptist Church, Bloomsburg
 Special speaker: Rev. Rand Hummel
 The Wilds of New England

Date: April 1 – 2, 2022

See www.parbc.org (Teen Activities)

Spring Conference – April 25 & 26, 2022

Grace Baptist Church, Kittanning
 Hosts: Pastor Nathan S. Bramlet & Congregation

Fall Conference – September 12 – 14, 2022

Faith Baptist Church, State College
 Hosts: Pastor Drew Fenstermacher & Congregation

[Future Dates for Conferences are on our website](http://www.parbc.org)

www.parbc.org

calls us to have “heart surgery.” That can be a fearful expectation, especially when Hosea reveals what “the surgeon” looks like.

Our Hearts Seek Idols

Israel’s prophets addressed sin, but especially focused on ONE particular sin, the “adultery of idolatry.”

For their mother hath played the harlot: she that conceived them hath done shamefully: for she said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. (Hosea 2:5)

According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. (Hosea 13:6)

Like Israel, we tend to love God’s competitors more than we love Him to whom we rightly belong. If you doubt this, recall Colossians 3:5, Ephesians 5:5, and Matthew 6:24 insist covetousness is idolatry. We take God and His gifts for granted, and let our love be seduced away from the Creator to creations. Visions of prosperity can be spiritually seductive. We can easily forget God when tempted by so many of His gifts. So, we do not thank Him or consciously depend on Him. Even more significantly, our cool hearts neglect our greatest need, a close walk with God himself. But our hearts *will* inevitably love something, so cold hearts quickly become wayward hearts that seek other loves. Not surprisingly, these frustrate us. People and things were not made to be what we need them to be when we love them as substitutes for God.

A Lion Tears Open the Heart

Like any loving spouse betrayed by unfaithfulness, God deeply feels our betrayal. Betrayal evokes deep emotions. But in God’s unfailing love, He seeks to win our love and restore us to Himself. But how? Hosea uses a shocking metaphor for God at work in restoring:

For I will be unto Ephraim as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah: I, even I, will tear... (Hosea 5:14a)

Therefore I will be unto them ***as a lion***: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will ***rend the caul of their heart***, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them. (Hosea 13:7-8)

God is a “beast?” Yes. He is a Lion with razor-sharp claws extending from powerful paws that slash and tear! It’s a frightening image and leads us to sympathetically feel pain. We al-

ready know about searing pain. We experience it in many forms (broken marriages feel like that). But we don't always connect our pain with God being "a lion" with protracted claws. "*Rend the caul of their heart...*" is a distressing image, but meant to be revealing. It shows God must cut very deep. It suggests exposing the inner person, making the heart open to inspection. God wants us to see our heart in its deformed condition and be motivated to change; or better, go to "the Lion" to change our loves. Such exposing can be painful, and fearful. The good news is that the Lion turns out to be a highly skilled surgeon!

We Seek Healing Easier than Lion Attacks Demand

God doesn't move on to healing too quickly. What is required is not readily embraced. We seek easier healings. Jeremiah calls these "slight" (Jer. 6:14; 8:11), like taking Tylenol for cancer. God knows that when we hurt, we prefer to go to other "doctors" to heal us.

When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound, then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb: yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound. (Hosea 5:13)

The idols of our hearts do not die easily. They persuade us that God's instructions will kill our happiness! So, like Judah sought healing from worldly powers, we tend to soothe our wounds by seeking unfaithful loves more aggressively. We feel empty, so we pour into a business venture, seek a new relationship, watch TV, surf the internet, see if anyone will notice us on social media, pursue physical thrills, or seek some sensual, fleeting, pleasure. When these fail us, we seek even more radically, or give up in cynical despair.

But even if we seek the Lord himself, it is tempting to seek "quick" healing. This is one of Hosea's concerns, and might be the point of Hosea 6:2:

"After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." (Hosea 6:2)

Three days for healing would be remarkable. Of course, God can do anything. But the prophets are skeptical of quick proclamations of "I'm healed! Let's get on with normal life!" They doubt we are taking God seriously enough. We are suspicious of a wayward spouse's claim to be changed soon after being caught. Claims of quick healing often prove to be short-lived healings. The disease comes right back. It takes time and sobering testing and hard counsel to fully restore a broken relationship. Learning to give up competing loves can be very difficult, so we should expect God's restoring work to take time and ongoing pains in cutting out old loves and nurturing healthy new ones.

But there's a fuller meaning in Hosea 6 in contrast to "easy healing." Our waywardness requires death; death to self and sin. But God has provided a substitute to take our place.

In other words, we are to be taking advantage of every opportunity to share the gospel with others. Yes, time is getting shorter and shorter. With each passing day there is less time to redeem. We must sense the urgency to walk toward those that are without” Christ. Each day’s passing is a done deal – we can’t change it. But we can be more focused and committed for the next day walking in more knowledge

The public announcements have been made: “There will be shortages in the stores for Christmas gifts this year – so make sure you purchase your gifts early.” If you have been in many stores in the last few weeks – they are getting crowded. Would it be wonderful to see born again believers making early preparations to share/witness to those around us that are without Christ this Christmas? Now that would make this time of year very special – to see a lost, condemned soul accept Christ as their Savior! WOW!

I trust you all will have a blessed Thanksgiving. and a wonderful time with family and friends at Christmas. It is always a special blessing at this time of the year.

A Son, A Savior–Continued

dled in her arm, He slept. A lantern dimly lit the room so that she could barely see Him. His head, which she now held in the cup of her hand, was crowned in downy dark hair. His brows knitted as he squeezed His eyes tightly against the feeble light.

Would she ever get used to His magnificence? That He was God’s son? That she was holding the Messiah, the one Whom Israel had waited centuries for. She tried to speak but could not. More than exhaustion no words would come but because her mind filled with the words of the prophets: *You shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto You the throne of Your father David. You shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of Your kingdom there shall be no end. And the government shall be upon Your shoulder: and You shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. And of the increase of Your government and peace there shall be no end.*

Overwhelmed, tears spilled from her cheeks onto the baby’s. She drew Him close to her as if to protect Him. Her mouth quivered, as her mother’s heart could not bear to what Isaiah’s words might mean: He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; He will have no form nor comeliness; and when they shall see Him, they will not desire Him. He will be despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; He will be despised; they will not esteem Him. But He shall be wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; and with His stripes we will be healed.

How would she rear this baby? How would she be the mother of Israel’s Savior and King? Her husband Joseph knelt down to comfort her. Silently, they both looked at the infant. It seemed they were the only ones in all the world who knew that unto all men had been born that day, “...a child...a son...a Saviour...Christ the Lord” “And his name shall be called...” “Jesus,” Mary finally spoke His name.

At the sound of her voice, the baby opened His eyes. Like all newborn babies, He could neither focus nor speak, but her soul heard Him answer, “Be still and know that I am God.”

of Scripture at some point earlier in the service. This Scripture reading may go along with the sermon text or may be a section of a book of the Bible that the church is systematically reading. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul emphasizes that worshipers must be instructed from God's Word. Apart from God's Word, people are imperfect and incomplete. A biblical message includes doctrine and exhortation (application of the truth).

Hopefully, this article provided more light than heat. One purpose for sharing this is to help churches become intentional about each part of its services. If there is a desire for more help on this topic, this article relied heavily on two resources *The Beauty of Holiness: A Guide to Biblical Worship* by Michael P. V. Barrett and *The Glory Due His Name: What God Says about Worship* by Gary Reimers.

Lion—Continued

Through faith our sinfulness dies in Jesus Christ. Healing is made sure by God raising Christ "on the third day," "risen with healing in his wings." Being united with Christ, by faith, we can live in righteousness because idolatry has no more dominion over us. (Romans 6:4-8).

The Lion Roars, Turn and Face Him!

God knows that unless we come to adequately fear Him our love will be fickle and too easily corrupted. Therefore, God "roars!"

They shall walk after the LORD: **he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar**, then the children shall tremble from the west. (Hosea 11:10)

To walk with God, we must fear Him more sufficiently and turn from our idols. We must fear enough to be honest about the depth of our waywardness and submit to the surgery and healing God prescribes. Our lack of love is linked to our lack fearing God. The Lion's grace-filled roar first teaches our heart to fear, and then relieves our fears as we realize it overwhelms our foes.

The Lion will Heal

The Lion roars judgment boldly, but God's real purpose is to heal.

Come, and let us return to the LORD; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. (Hosea 6:1)

O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God... (Hosea 14:1a)

I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely... (Hosea 14:4a)

But what does God's healing plan require? How do we receive His promise of healing?

Lion–Continued

Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. “Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods:” For in thee the fatherless findeth mercy. (Hosea 14:2-3)

The Surgeon’s prescription:

First, submit to “The Lion’s tearing claws.” Let your frustrations, disappointments, pains, and unhappiness be God’s work of exposing your wrong loves. Fear letting idols continue to mislead you. Ask a pastor or partner to help.

Second, come to your senses like the “prodigal son” in the pig pen. Recognize how foolish you have been in loving idols more than the source of every good thing.

Third, bare your soul before the Lord in earnest prayer and seek His restoring work.

Fourth, turn from all of your loves that are not submitted to love for God. Name them and repent of them one by one.

Fifth, seek God with all your heart as your good, as if your life depends on it (it does).

Finally, recognize that while this work of healing must begin with a point of intention, it must not end. We must all seek the Lion, who both wounds and heals, all of our lives.



We send you not only our best wishes this holiday season but more so, that you see fruit in your ministry, experience physical and mental strength and have peace in your hearts. Together let's look forward to His coming—Maybe in 2022.

*Love and prayers,
Paul & Judy Connor*
