

2023 Congregational Worship Plan

2023 is the year of the Christian Sabbath. It begins and ends on a Sunday as both January 1 and December 31 fall on the Lord's Day. Because of the alignment, 2023 will have 53, not 52, Sundays. Also, we will have not 4, but 5 months with 5 Sundays: January, April, July, October, and December. God is providing us two extra times to get together for congregational worship.

For the upcoming year, I am proposing some modest changes to the elements, forms, and circumstances of our worship. These are not changes for the sake of change. What I'm proposing is to introduce more Scripture in our worship through reading and singing and simplifying the pattern of standing and sitting. Please carefully consider the following.

New Elements (those things Scripture teaches are essential to worship)

OT Scripture Reading

For 2023, I propose adding a Scripture reading to the morning and evening worship services. In the mornings, we will read a passage from Deuteronomy. By the end of the year, we will have read the entire book. In evening worship, we will read from a selected Psalm. These readings are in addition to reading the sermon text.

Congregational Response

After the Scripture reading, I propose a brief congregational response, generally drawn from Psalm 119, where the congregation states its belief in the Bible as God's Word. For example:

Pastor: The grass withers and the flower fades,

Congregation: But the Word of our God will stand forever.

(Is. 40:8)

Changes to Forms (the content of the elements of worship)

Standing

If we add the public reading of Scripture, I propose the congregation stand at three points in worship: the first hymn and subsequent reading; the second hymn and subsequent reading; the final hymn and benediction. The congregation will remain seated during the confession of faith in the morning and confession of sin in the evening.

Confession of Faith

Up until now, I have chosen each Sunday's confession of faith to correspond topically with my sermon text. I propose we begin working through the *Westminster Larger Catechism* week-by-week.

Music

The Psalms provide a wonderful means of expressing ourselves to God in worship and are a great tool for biblical discipleship. Though we do not have psalters, I propose learning a "Psalm-of-the-month" which will be printed in the bulletin. If approved, in 2023 we will sing through some of the favorite Psalms: 139, 1, 22, 23, 121, etc. Printing the music in the bulletin will encourage the congregation to incorporate the Psalms into family worship.

Month	Psalm	Title
January	139B	<i>Lord, You Have Searched Me</i>
February	1B	<i>How Blest the Man</i>
March	32a	<i>What Blessedness Belongs to Him</i>
April	22A	<i>My God, My God, O Why Have You Forsaken Me?</i>
May	23A	<i>The Lord's My Shepherd</i>
June	110A	<i>The Lord Said to My Lord</i>
July	2A	<i>Why Do Heathen Nations Rage?</i>
August	121B	<i>To the Hills I Lift My Eyes</i>
September	150C	<i>Sing Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!</i>
October	19B	<i>The Heavens Above Declare</i>
November	14	<i>The Fool Speaks in His Heart</i>
December	45B	<i>My Heart Does Overflow</i>

Preaching Plan

In 2023, we will continue working through Matthew's Gospel during morning worship, with occasional breaks to observe Resurrection Day, officer nomination season, and advent. Unless providentially hindered, we should get through Matthew 20.

In the evenings, I'd like to begin preaching through the thirty-three chapters of the Westminster Confession. Though it will take some time to complete, it will ground our members in the teaching of Scripture. So, we'll have expository preaching in the morning and doctrinal preaching in the evening.