



## Blended Worship at St. Peter's

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At St Peter's we describe our 11:00 am service as a blended service, blending both traditional and contemporary styles together. To understand this, the following table illustrates the wide diversity of styles that Christian worship can take. At the core of the different styles of services are different approaches to God.

*Table 1: The Worship-Style Spectrum*

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Heart-Attitude:	<i>Awe &amp; Reverence</i>	<i>Joy &amp; Celebration</i>
Theology:	God's Transcendence (Holy, Almighty God)	God's Immanence (Personal, Intimate God)
Worship Ethos:	Liturgical, ritualized, formal	Limited ritual, informal
Worship Form:	Limited change	Innovative
Theology:	God as unchanging, constant	God as responsive, creative
Culture:	Unconnected	Highly connected

This table proposes a spectrum by which to identify different styles of corporate worship, beginning with the person's heart-attitude towards God in their worship: some people want worship to be an experience that focuses on awe and reverence, on the transcendence, the 'almightyness' of God; others prefer worship to be an experience that focuses on joy and celebration, on the immanence or personalness of God.

### ***Blending Two Styles***

'Awe and Reverence' is often the preferred emphasis by 'traditional worship'. Awe and Reverence styles are enabled by an atmosphere of formality and deference in the presence of God. To create and convey such an atmosphere, such styles of worship are shaped to be highly liturgical, or ritualized. The form of such worship tends to change only gradually over time, reflecting the stability, unchangingness, and reliability of God. Consequently, such styles are little affected by the cultural world around. These styles generally appeal to those raised in cultures that value formality, and such styles have a pastoral advantage of giving people the sense of God's reliability in life's difficult moments – 'Although I live with deep struggles and difficult changes in my life, I receive comfort knowing that God does not change, that God is always constant and reliable for me'. These styles have the potential mission advantage of offering the unchurched something very different from their experience of ordinary daily life and culture – the transcendence of God brings a transcendent respite from the shallow transience of everyday culture and the disorder of daily life. It should be noted that Awe and Reverence styles are not devoid of joy and celebration, but joy and celebration are not greatly emphasized, and outsiders are unlikely to use words such as joy or celebration as their primary descriptions of these styles of service.

'Joy and Celebration' is often the preferred emphasis of 'contemporary worship'. Joy and Celebration styles are enabled by informality and freedom, and thus are less ritualized, less liturgical. They tend to value creativity, reflecting the creativity of God, and thus tend to value innovation, reflecting God's responsiveness to our varying personal situations. Such styles tend to be highly connected to the cultures around them, drawing from local culture in styles of music, dress, aesthetics and speech. The pastoral advantage of the informality of such styles of worship is to connect participants with the personalness, the intimacy, and the closeness of God – God is 'close to me, to us'. Such 'personalness' with God is then transferred to personal relationships within the Christian community, and so joy and celebration styles often emphasize the value of being able to talk about one's faith and being comfortable praying with others. The mission advantage of these styles is their appeal to those raised in cultures that value informality (such as North American society since the 1960s), and their ability to make the worship experience less alien for the unchurched (because the unchurched share cultural commonalities with the worship, such as the style of music). It should be noted that Joy and Celebration styles are not devoid of awe and reverence, but awe and reverence are less emphasized, and outsiders would not usually use words such as 'awe-inspiring' and 'reverent' as their primary descriptions of these styles of service.

So both traditional and contemporary styles have their own respective strengths and weaknesses as vehicles not only for the worship of God but also for evangelism and for nurturing Christian fellowship. Interestingly, the disadvantages of each are precisely the advantages of the other. More importantly, both styles are found in Scripture, teaching us that God values what both have to offer. Thus St Peter's, like many churches, has chosen to shape its public worship by 'blending' together elements from across this spectrum.