

In order to fulfill the decision made by the council of the Ann Arbor Christian Reformed Church at its September Council meeting, and having considered several models for helping lead this year we are proposing the formation of a Vital Worship Team to guide the congregation of the AACRC through the coming year in worship.

### *Context*

We believe that communal worship of our triune God is a vital element of a thriving congregation. Our desire is congregational worship that is integrated with the whole life of the congregation. It can serve as the “source and summit” from which all the practices of the Christian life flow. Such worship both reflects and shapes the life of the church in education, pastoral care, community service, fellowship, justice, hospitality, and every other aspect of church life. We imagine a shared vision for worship that is grounded in more than personal aesthetic tastes. This vision must draw on the deep theological resources of Scripture, the Christian tradition, and the unique history of our congregation. The best worship practices feature not only good worship “content”, but they also arise out of good process. What will it take to articulate this shared vision? (paraphrased from John D. Witvliet, editor’s foreword, *Vital Worship, Healthy Congregations* series, The Alban Institute)

In Fall 2017 Council proposed a ‘reset’ year to help us ask good questions about our vision, a year of focus on worship, mission, and faith formation/pastoral care. This proposal proceeded two Worship Discussion Groups, the second of which suggested a time of focus on worship. This reset year was prompted by multiple factors including:

- continual wondering if our worship could become more vital (it is good, could it be better?)
- gradual declining worship attendance
- aging of original congregation members and changing life circumstances
- volunteers spread thin, especially young families
- wondering about our 8:45/11:15 worship model we began in 1992
- anticipation of staffing changes

To facilitate this ‘reset’ year, Council approved having a single morning worship beginning December 2017 for one liturgical year. Worshipping together in one worship service opens opportunities not possible with a two-service schedule, including more freedom for volunteers, pastors having more opportunity to be involved in our learning together, using the sanctuary during our education hour, youth being able to participate in worship more freely, and being able to gather together for potlucks and more, limited only by our imaginations.

### *Vital Worship Objectives*

The Vital Worship Team is asked to lead us as a congregation in a year of prayer, listening, and learning around worship revitalization. The Vital Worship team will have the responsibility of proposing a unified vision for worship at the AACRC.

In order to accomplish this task, they will:

- I. Create regular opportunities for congregational learning on various topics of worship and share resources to help our congregation think critically and imagine creatively about worship in our community
- II. Build in regular reflection mechanisms for learning and worship experiences during this reset year, so that the entire worshipping community is able to engage in this process of discernment together
- III. Receive and share information with those involved in planning worship (the pastors, planners, and those in supporting roles)
- IV. Commit to regular communication with the congregation
- V. Develop a working document for Council, which will communicate what the Vital Worship Team has learned as well as propose more concrete guidance and ideas following the reset year

### *Timeline*

In order for Council to have sufficient time to process and discern prior to the end of the reset year in December 2018, the Vital Worship Team will work to have a draft proposal ready for Council by June 2018, with the understanding that some of their work, learning, and interactions with Council will proceed for the entire reset year

### *Resources and Helpful Links*

John D. Witvliet, editor's foreword, Vital Worship, Healthy Congregations series, The Alban Institute (excerpts found at <https://alban.org/archive/vital-worship-healthy-congregations/>)

Ten Core Convictions about vital Christian Worship:

<https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/ten-core-convictions/>