

Covenant Reformed Presbyterian Church  
 281 Edgewood Road  
 Asheville, North Carolina 28804

# THE SALTSHAKER

A PUBLICATION OF COVENANT REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Office: 828-253-6578—Email: crpchq@gmail.com—Website: www.covenantreformed.net

## Something Old, Something New

By Rev. Sean McCann

As we draw near to the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in October, we as a congregation will be reflecting on our theological heritage and the ongoing significance of the Reformation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In our adult Sunday school class this fall we will engage in a study of the history of the Reformation period through a Ligonier video series and discussion to follow. Often when we think of the Reformation we think of theological reforms (i.e. the five *solas* of the Reformation) or the rejection of certain practices that had become popular in the Roman Catholic church (e.g. the selling of indulgences). However, the reforms did not stop there: as I have written elsewhere, two other great legacies of the Reformation are the recovery of a Presbyterian (elder led) form of church government, and a return to biblical worship. The Reformers were pastors and scholars committed to reforming not only their theology according to Scripture, but also to reforming their worship according to Scripture.

Because of this commitment, for centuries reformed elders have thought carefully about their worship services in order that they might be biblical, that is in “spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Along those same lines, we as a Session have been periodically considering and discussing our worship service, and this past month we voted to make a number of changes to our standard worship order. These changes are in some ways a big deal, and in other ways not a big deal at all. One the one hand, when a church has done something the same way for decades even the slightest change can be jarring, and so I know that it may take a while for some of you to feel “at home” in our new service. On the other hand, all of the changes keep us squarely in the stream of historic, Reformed worship and remain aligned with our core commitments as a church. (We are not replacing the sermon with a skit, or bringing in a fog machine!)

These changes will involve rearranging some of the elements (such as moving the sermon further back in the service), adding new items (like singing the *Gloria Patri* and reading an Assurance of Pardon), and removing other items (such as the Declaration of Hope). We will also start to sing more of the Psalms together – both out of our *Trinity Hymnal* and *With Heart and Voice*, as well as from other sources like the Psalter – but we will not be introducing new styles of music or instruments. We are also working on a new bulletin format that will give us more space to accommodate some of these changes. Our tentative plan is to implement these changes and begin our new order of worship on Sunday, October 1.

Another significant change will be to our Lord’s Supper schedule. Starting in October we will celebrate the Lord’s Supper on the first and third Sundays in the morning service, and on the fifth Sunday in the evening service. We are shuffling these dates for two reasons. First, we want to add an opportunity for this important sacrament during our evening worship without taking away from either of the two scheduled times per month in the morning. Secondly, we want to pair together our taking of the Lord’s Supper with our meals together at the beginning of each month. This pattern follows the tradition of the early church to celebrate the Lord’s Supper together with a common meal (1 Corinthians 11:17-44). So in October we will partake of the Lord’s Supper on October 1 (first Sunday) and October 15 (third Sunday) during the morning service, and on October 29 (fifth Sunday) during the evening service.

In order to prepare for these changes, Pastor Bill and I will be teaching on the topic of worship during our Wednesday night prayer meetings during the month of September. We will cover some of the bigger topics re-

## Upcoming Events

September and October			Weekly Events		
September 3	Noon	Church Picnic	<b>Sunday Morning:</b>		
September 10	11:00 am	The Lord’s Supper	Opening Exercises	9:30 am	
September 10	6:00 pm	Evening Worship	Sunday School	9:45 am	
September 17	6:00 pm	Evening Worship	Morning Worship	11:00 am	
September 24	11:00 am	The Lord’s Supper	Evening Worship	6:00 pm (except first Sundays)	
September 24	6:00 pm	Evening Worship	<b>Wednesday Evening:</b>		
October 1	11:00 am	The Lord’s Supper	Supper	6:00 pm	
October 1	Noon	Elder Groups	Bible Study/Prayer	6:45 pm	
October 8	6:00 pm	Evening Worship			<b>Bible Study</b>
October 15	11:00 am	The Lord’s Supper	<b>For Men:</b>		
October 15	6:00 pm	Evening Worship	Men’s Prayer Breakfast	8:00 am	2nd & 4th Saturdays
October 22	6:00 pm	Evening Worship	ROMEOS	8:00 am	Every Thursday
October 29	6:00 pm	Evening Worship	(Retired Old Men Eating Out)		
October 29	6:00 pm	The Lord’s Supper	at J&S Cafeteria, River Ridge		
			Norm Bomer’s Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays
			<b>For Women:</b>		
			Carol Belz’s Home	9:30 am	Every Tuesday
			Fellowship Hall	10:30 am	Every Wednesday
			Debbie Cate’s Home	7:00 pm	1st & 3rd Thursdays

*Continued from Page 1*

lated to congregational worship, and then walk through our new order and how we are to engage our hearts and minds through the different elements. This will be a time for you to ask questions or clarify any confusion that might arise as a result of these changes. I also plan to do some writing about some of the specific changes and the rationale behind them.

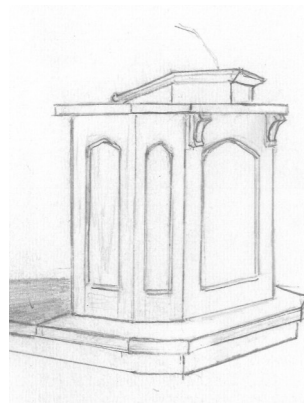
One final thing to be clear on: there is nothing wrong with our current order of worship. As you have visited different churches in our denomination - the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) - you have likely experienced a number of different styles of worship, and this is intentional. When it comes to worship the PCA has taken steps to establish freedom and boundaries. Our constitution enforces boundaries for worship, like the ones found in Chapter 21 of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. There we find the elements of biblical worship spelled out: prayer, reading Scripture, preaching, singing, and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These elements cannot be removed or added to, but in different contexts they may and should take on different forms. For example every week we pray a corporate Confession of Sin together, but

Scripture doesn't require that we read this prayer aloud, or pray silently – there is freedom for variety. Unlike other denominations that require a set order of worship (Anglicanism comes to mind), the PCA provides a "Directory for Worship" for her churches, but this directory does not have binding authority and therefore intentionally encourages variety. I believe that both of these worship orders – our current order and the new order – follow the historic patterns of reformed and Presbyterian worship. Even the patterns of the Reformers left room for variety: John Calvin and John Knox wrote different orders of worship. So too should we today seek to both root our liturgy in the historic patterns of our forefathers, while also adjusting the forms to our circumstances and convictions.

I hope many of you are able to attend our Wednesday night teaching series in September and read some of the forthcoming resources that will help to explain some of our changes. I also hope that we will all come to love and participate more and more in the joy of worshipping our triune God together with reverence and awe.

## The Sacred Desk

By Rev. Sean McCann



One of the challenges I have experienced this summer in preaching through the Ten Commandments is how to balance preaching both the law and the gospel. God's law is not only the foundation for human relationships - both with God and with one another - it is more importantly a standard of holiness that every Christian should strive for. And yet though we strive to live holy lives in accordance with God's word, we are all well aware that we fail daily to meet this standard of holiness and so we desperately need the grace and forgiveness of the cross. There at the foot of the cross we find mercy to help in our time of need, and then as cleansed and renewed children of God we are urged to return – with hearts filled with gratitude – to the law as our guide to a God-glorifying life. At times I feel that I have failed to maintain this balance between law and gospel, but I trust the Spirit has applied the word effectually to your heart.

With this balance in mind I am looking forward to our break from Exodus in the month of September to begin a short sermon series entitled *Jesus and the Law*. In this series we will consider some of the more famous passages from Matthew's Gospel regarding Jesus and his interaction with the law. We will look at Jesus' claims to have fulfilled the law (5:17-20), as well as his summary of the law in the Great Commandment (22:34-40). Despite how both of these passages are sometime interpreted, Jesus is not doing away with the law or lowering the law: rather he is the perfect embodiment of obedience to the law and instructs us in the proper view of the law. We will then examine some of the reasons as to why we break the law (15:1-20), and finally how to properly use the law (19:16-30). This final text is the Parable of the Rich Young Ruler and through it we will revisit the different uses of the law that I preached on back at the beginning of the summer. We will see again how the law functions as a muzzle to restrain sin in the world, as a mirror that reveals our sin and leads us to Christ, and as a map that directs us how to live.

I hope that if there has been any imbalance in our study of the Ten Commandments, then the words of Jesus will bring clarity and renewed zeal for his law and gratitude for his gospel.

Preaching Schedule		
Date	Morning	Evening
Sep. 3	Matt. 22:34-40	
Sep. 10	Matt. 5:17-20	John 10:1-21
Sep. 17	Matt. 15:1-20	John 10:22-42
Sep. 24	Matt. 19:16-30	John 11:1-44
Oct. 1	Ex. 23:20-22	
Oct. 8	Ex. 24	John 11:45-54
Oct. 15	Ex. 25-27	John 11:55-12:19
Oct. 22	Ex. 28-29	John 12:20-36
Oct. 29	Ex. 30-31	John 12:37-50

## Reflections on Worship

By Rev. Bill Clark

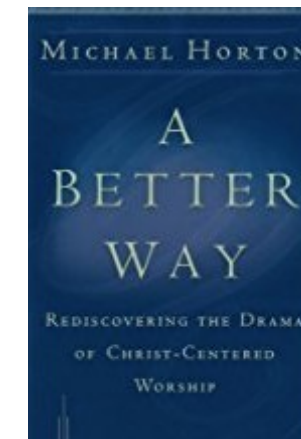
Shortly after the Lord saved me at the age of 19 during my sophomore year at the University of Alabama (1973), I knew I needed to attend worship services somewhere while at school. Not knowing where to begin, I walked a short distance to a Methodist church located just off the grounds of the U of A for their morning service. Now, this church was an older structure with a wonderful pipe organ. During that service the hymn, *How Firm a Foundation* was sung. To this day I remember that event, especially the singing of the hymn, as a momentous occasion. It was as if the Holy Spirit chose that time to write upon my heart the very message of the hymn, that God's Word is firm and true. It, and it alone, spells out the directives and truths by which I am to live. It was an electrifying event, so moving that I would (and still do) tell people that the hymn was my favorite. My sister even cross-stitched the first stanza for me to hang on the wall.

Over the years the hymn has continued to be a source of great encouragement. I do remember early on that I had to look up the definition of "hoary" in stanza five. "And when hoary hairs shall their temples adorn, like lambs they shall still in my bosom be borne." Hoary means, "gray or white with age, extremely old." (Merriam-Webster) Fast-forward to August 13, 2017, at CRPC, when we sang *How Firm a Foundation*. It was again a momentous worship experience for me. Like another lightning bolt, while singing stanza five, the truth was made crystal clear, **I am now that hoary-haired man** and the Lord has over all these intervening years (44, to be precise) done exactly according to the promises in His word! He has been the firm foundation through college, military, providing a wonderful wife, bringing three sons to life, giving jobs and all things necessary for life in this world, and the list could easily go on. I was quite overwhelmed. Cecelia could see it in my facial expression while we were singing.

So, am I just rambling, or is there application for us to take away from these musings? I will name three: Are you today rejoicing in the absolute faithfulness of the Lord in your life? I know many have had a much more difficult road to travel than I, but the question remains. Pray for the Lord to enable us all to rejoice in Him with joy inexpressible and full of glory (1 Peter 1:8) Do not let yourself fall into a "rut" concerning corporate worship where you have little to no expectations of anything significant happening. God is present in worship and in His own way and time, He just might choose to revive you with more direct dealings of His Spirit than usual. Remember the power of great hymns. Learn them yourself and teach them to your children. The "triple punch" of solid biblical truth, awesome poetry, and a singable tune are hard to beat. They provide needed encouragement in life's trials. Remember Paul and Silas in jail singing hymns to God (Acts 16:25) and what the Lord then did!!!

## A Better Way

By Rev. Sean McCann



How much thought have you ever given as to what goes into a corporate worship service? If you are like the average American Christian then you probably have a strong opinion on what kinds of music and instruments are best used in worship, but you may not have considered much else on the topic. I think after reading *A Better Way: Rediscovering the Drama of Christ-Centered Worship* by Michael Horton, it is safe to say that the author does not represent the average American Christian!

Michael Horton is a brilliant evangelical mind, and I believe his work on the topic of worship will be a go-to text for generations to come. In a fascinating paradox, *A Better Way* is filled with dense writing that requires disciplined attention and constant reflection, while at the same time proposes a simple and straightforward philosophy of worship and ministry. Horton's thesis – in his own words – is this: "God has promised to save and keep his people through the means he has appointed and through no others; the ordinary means of grace are limited to the preached Word and the administered sacraments; God's rationale for these means is made explicit in Scripture." As he goes through the book and examines numerous passages and ideas, it is easy to get lost in his detailed description of the trees, but the view of the forest in the end is beautiful in its simplicity and he makes a compelling case for the church to structure herself in dependence on God's means of grace.

My favorite part of the book is how he deals with the Sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper, which he calls "A Table in the Wilderness." He notes that the Passover Meal points us to the Lord's Supper: "It is a rite of commemoration of and participation in a redemptive-historical event that God brought about in the concrete existence of a particular people." For Horton it is important that we do more than merely observe the sacrament, he urges us to remember how we the "participate in" the sacrament and become receivers of all the benefits of the Supper.

Whether you agree with Horton or not, you cannot walk away from the book and not be impressed at the depth of his study and the unity of his thought. Despite the fact that *A Better Way* is probably the hardest book we will read together this year, I believe it may prove to be the most beneficial as it invites us to rediscover the drama of worship.

(In October we will meet to discuss *The Unquenchable Flame: Discovering the Heart of the Reformation* by Michael Reeves)