

## WORSHIP IN SONG AT SOUTH

### Elders' Vision:

1. We want God to be truly and genuinely praised and exalted in our congregational singing. As the Scripture says, "Let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise---the fruit of lips that confess his name" (Hebrews 13:15) and "Let us come before him with thanksgiving, and extol him with music and song" (Psalms 95:2) and again "Your name and renown are the desire of our hearts" (Isaiah 26:8b). This is the privilege and rightful service of *all* Christians.
2. We want all members to be engaged with their lips, but even more with their hearts and thoughts, in our congregational singing. As the Scripture says, "Speak to one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the father for everything." (Ephesians 5:19, 20a) and "I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind" (I Corinthians 12:15b).
3. We want our singing to strengthen, build up, and encourage one another. As the Scripture says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your heart to God" (Colossians 3:16) and "When you come together, everyone has a hymn, a word of instruction, etc. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church" (I Corinthians 14:26).
4. We want to strive as a congregation for excellence in all things, including our singing. This is not an exclusive excellence, but one in which each member seeks to bring his or her best to God and to encourage and assist others in that pursuit. As Scripture says, "Whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable---if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things" (Philippians 4:8b) and "Whatever your hand finds to do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (Colossians 3:23).

### Praise Teams:

The elders have tried to base their decision about the use of a praise team (miked singers sitting at the front of the auditorium) to assist us in our singing in light of the previous vision. We are of the opinion that a praise team does have potential in helping us to achieve some of these goals. We were pleased with the large number of responses that we received from the congregation concerning our six month experiment with praise teams and thank all of you who took the time to express yourself. About 75% of the responses were favorable and supportive of praise teams with the most common responses being that the praise team helped the worship in song to be more meaningful or inspiring for them or that the praise team helped them to do a better job with their singing. We see these responses as being consistent with our goals, particularly items 3 and 4.

We are setting no fixed policy for the percentage of time we use praise teams in the assemblies, but plan to try to vary it appropriately with regard to such factors as its perceived helpfulness to our congregational singing, desires of our various song leaders, availability of singers, and level of support of the congregation. We want the praise team to maintain a low profile and stimulate, not inhibit or detract from, our congregational singing. And we want to use other means such as singing classes to seek to build and maintain good congregational singing.

**Acapella Singing:** Acapella singing was the exclusive music of the church for the first hundreds of years of its existence, remained common, even normative, in many churches through the eighteenth century, and continues to be normative for millions of Eastern Orthodox believers, many Anabaptists (the Mennonites and Amish), Reformed Presbyterians, some Baptist groups, and special groups such as Sacred Harp singers. We believe that congregational acapella singing is admirably suited for "a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of our lips" and for "speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" and want to foster, strengthen, and encourage congregational acapella singing in our assemblies. That being said, we do not believe that acapella singing is the only means of achieving these results, nor do we believe that other practices (instrumental accompaniment, solos) are forbidden by Scripture, although we have no intention of introducing them into our assemblies.