



June 5, 2020

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.”

Colossians 3:16

To our worshipping family at First Baptist Church,

This Sunday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020, we are beginning two events during Sunday worship: the first being our bodily return to worship and the second being our six-week study of Paul’s Letter to the Colossians. When it became evident that Colossians was calling to the life of First Baptist Church, the verse above became a tangible guideline for how our services need to be crafted. However, as your Worship Pastor I’d like to take a moment to share some thoughts on its application, as this is a crucial time for the vitality of our worshipping life.

Music has always been a part of my worship and I’m sure the same could be said for everyone reading this. We hear the songs of God’s people all over Scripture, so what happens when singing becomes a health risk?

We face two risks with singing currently: first, the possibility of spreading COVID-19 due to unmasked faces. This is being remedied by wearing masks during the service. Herein lies our second risk: singing into masks.

I’ve attempted, on my own time as I’ve gone to the store and around town, to sing or hum while wearing a mask. The verdict? It’s difficult. I’ve kept in touch with fellow musicians and singing organizations recently and have heard consistently that the risks of singing into a mask are numerous including difficulty breathing, lower oxygen levels, an increase of CO<sub>2</sub> inhalation, headaches, and higher risk of injury for pre-existing respiratory conditions such as asthma.

Now, please hear what I’m not saying: I am NOT saying do not sing. This would be demoralizing for our worshipful acts. That said, I’d like to alleviate some concerns about what this means for worship.

I firmly stand on the word “pastor” as being more important than “musician” in the title “Pastoral Musician.” Therefore, my concern for everyone’s health is of greater concern to me than simply programming music. As we go through these masked services, notice that, specifically during our opening moments of the service prior to the sermon (a segment I call “The Gathering”), there will be opportunities to engage in the service during music that does not require your singing. I believe this is both permissible and beneficial because of passages like Colossians 3:16. Letting the word of Christ dwell in us with thankfulness by prayer, Scripture reading, and socially-distant greetings reveals deeper realities for our true worship (the glorification of Christ in our vocations) than singing for the sake of tradition ever could.

Congregational participation in worship extends far beyond singing, and now is the time to reacquaint ourselves with this. As contemporary Christians, our Scriptural endurance is greatly diminished, as is our endurance in prayer. This is the time to gather around these two vital elements of our faith again and regain what has been lost.

Lastly, the ends of each service will often include songs as our response to the sermon, so there will be time for you to sing. Having one segment of isolated music shouldn’t overextend our

capacity to sing into masks. However, this is where I must ask that each person present on Sunday morning be aware of their own health. If singing ever becomes difficult, stop. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly through song. This can be just as nourishing as singing the faith.

Needless to say, choir, for the time being, will be postponed for the summer. We will reassess what this looks like in the fall, and I hope to be able to return to group singing soon, but health is of greater importance than singing.

I look forward to seeing you progressively as you choose to return. For those of you continuing to worship online, continue participating as you have! We will be brainstorming ways of being more engaging for you as well during these hybrid services.

To close, it's an honor to lead the worshiping life of First Baptist Church with Pastor Dan. Please, pray for us as we search to craft services that are honoring to the spiritual needs of all in attendance.

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Daniel