

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF STRATFORD
1301 STRATFORD AVENUE
STRATFORD, CONNECTICUT 06615**

DR. WILLIAM B. SUTTON, III, PASTOR

CONDUITS OF RESPONSIBLE WORSHIP



THE WORSHIP MINISTRY
Partners and Co-Laborers with Christ

A Message From Our Pastor

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Most of us have heard the Scripture quoted that states, “God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24).” This statement made by Jesus during his earthly ministry emphasizes one of the central aspects of our faith. We were created to be in communion, fellowship and to worship God! No human life is complete from God’s perspective until we come to an appreciation of the centrality of worship. As a matter of fact, one of the defining characteristics of the People of God is our responsibility to be a worshipping community. I am delighted to see that our Worship Ministry has taken our responsibility to present ourselves to the Lord in worship seriously. This booklet is designed to stimulate and challenge our understanding of worship. The goal of the content of this booklet is to assist us in making our worship a sacred, powerful, and life changing experience. It is my prayer that each of us will take the opportunity to prayerfully study its contents. Additionally, I hope that each of us will seek to incorporate the principles that are explored in this booklet into our understanding of God.

Grace & Peace!

William B. Sutton, III

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Worship Ministry is to create and enhance opportunities to experience God through worship in a sacred place.

Church Covenant

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment;

To avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger;

To abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love, to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

***Church Etiquette**

What is Church Etiquette?

There is no written rulebook about church behavior for Baptists. This information represents what churches typically teach about expected behavior in church. Some of the rules mentioned here will be new but make sense; the rest are based on common sense.

Etiquette is defined as “**the customary rules for conduct or behavior in polite society.**” Church etiquette is the customary rules for conduct and behavior in a church of God. It falls into several broad categories:

Honoring the Sanctuary

- 1: Speaking from the Pulpit: Only the minister or invited speakers are allowed to speak from the center pulpit. Other persons are asked to use side lecterns if they are participating in the worship service.
- 2: Being in the Pulpit: Only the minister, or persons authorized by the minister should ever be in the pulpit. Children should be taught at young ages that this is a sacred spot and can never be used as a play area.
- 3: Enter and Exit As Directed: If you must leave the sanctuary during church service, do not pass in front of the pulpit. Use the side aisles and exits so that you will not disturb others.
- 4: Maintaining Silence Before God: During the service, the congregation is expected to actively participate in worship. However, God's house is a place for reverence and worship, not loud and idle conversations (between each other or cell phones).

- 5: Treatment of Church Bibles and Hymnals: Bibles and Hymnals that are placed in pews are to be treated with care and respect. They should not be written on or used to dispose of gum. The bindings should be cared for; the spines of Bibles and Hymnals should be protected. They are the property of the church and should not be taken home by parishioners. Parishioners should let the church leadership know if Bibles and Hymnals are in need of repair.
- 6: Treatment of the Communion Table: The Communion table is used for one of two holy ordinances (ceremonies or rites) of the Baptist Church. Ministers and others who are in charge of the Communion service are the only persons permitted to use it. Personal items should never be placed on the Communion table.
- 7: Treatment of the Baptismal Pool: Baptism is the other important ordinance of the Baptist Church. In many churches the baptismal pool is covered and they are typically drained of water until the day of the ceremony. However, some churches have more easily accessible baptismal pools. No one is to ever go into the baptismal pool unless they have specific instructions to do so by church leadership (typically ministers, deacons or trustees).
- 8: Treatment of the Pews: Pews are the benches that we sit in on Sundays and for other church services. We should treat them respectfully.
- 9: Language that Honors God: Part of your commitment to God is to use language that honors God. Swearing in the sanctuary or any other part of the church is forbidden.
- 10: Enter and Exit as Directed: Typically, you are not supposed to enter or leave the sanctuary during prayers, the reading of the Scripture or the sermon

You are also to remain in church until the closing *benediction* (final prayer of the service) has been said. Ushers, considered gatekeepers of the church, will remind you of these rules if you arrive late, have left to use the restroom, or have another reason to walk into or out of the sanctuary. Of course, emergencies are special cases and will be dealt with as they occur.

- 11: No Food, Beverages or Chewing Gum in the Sanctuary: This is another way of respecting the sanctity of God's house. Use of these items is too casual in church and runs the risk of ruining church property and wasting tithes made to God on repairs that would not otherwise be necessary. While the chewing gum rule is sometimes broken, its use should be kept to a minimum, and it should always be disposed of properly (not under pews, in Bibles or on other church property).

Honoring the Church Building

- 1: Cleanliness is Next to Godliness: Be certain to keep the church clean as a way to honor God. After church classes or church meals, make certain that all chairs and tables are where they are supposed to be, and throw away all paper in trash bins. Clean up after yourself in the bathroom and cooperate with any other rules of the church sanitation staff.
- 2: Eat Only Where It Is Allowed: Follow the church rules for eating in the church building.
- 3: Keep the Outside of the Church Building Neat and Clean: The outside of the church reflects the inside of the church. Make certain that trash is picked up, that flowerbeds are tended, and that nothing unsightly mars the look of God's house.
- 4: Language That Honors God: Refer to Honoring the Sanctuary, Rule 9.

Honoring Christian Symbols

- 1: Treat Christian Symbols with Respect: Crosses and other Christian symbols around the church building are to be looked at, honored, and respected. We should not use them for other than their intended purposes.
- 2: Respect the Ordinances of the Baptist Church: Please refer to Honoring the Sanctuary, Rules 5 and 6. Remember also that the *elements* of the Communion service can only be used by those who have been baptized.
- 3: Respect the Bible: Some of the rules about how the Bible is to be respected have changed over the years. Twenty years ago, people only wrote in their Bibles to record family births and deaths. Now we use our Bibles to study and learn and worship. We should never use them in ways that dishonor God.

Honoring the Pulpit:

This is the spot from which the minister preaches God's word. Refer to Honoring the Sanctuary: Rule 10.

Honoring Each Other

- 1: Treat One Another With Kindness: God wants us to be good to one another so, whatever bad mood you had in the car on your way to church, you should greet each other kindly, in God's name, when you meet in church.
- 2: Row Two Is Not Your Pew: If you like a particular seat in the sanctuary, then be sure to get there early enough to claim it. It is unreasonable to ask someone to give up a seat that they are in because you normally sit there. (If the seat is very important to you, then you might consider attending often enough that others know that it is your typical seat!)

- 3: Don't Say Bad Things About God's People: God warns against gossip and backbiting. Our grandmothers recalled this lesson and tried to teach it to us by saying, "If you can't say something good about someone, don't say anything at all." We should try to remember this in all aspects of our lives, but especially in God's house.

Honoring Ourselves

- 1: Honoring God Honors Us: If we keep God's commandments, and honor the Lord's holy places, then we do honor to ourselves as well.
- 2: Enjoy The Worship Service: God's house, in the Baptist tradition, is a place to honor God in an *evangelical* style, where singing, handclapping, vocal praise, and other expressions of being Spirit-filled are expected and accepted.
- 3: Dress Appropriately: Many Christian churches have relaxed their rules about dressing for church from the strict adherence to suits and ties for men and boys and dresses and suits for women and girls. While the 21st century Baptist church still tends to be somewhat formal, it recognizes that it is most important for members to be present in worship in a manner that is appropriate and that honors God. To that end, we are expected to wear our very best, whether it be dressy or casual. We should always dress as if we are going to meet someone important (and there is no one more important than God).

*(Reprinted with permission from *Being Baptist: A Guide for the Uninformed, the Newly Converted and the Forgetful* by Lora-Ellen McKinney, Ph.D. This document cannot be copied without the express permission of the author.)

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The Worship Ministry

Dear Co-Laborers with Christ

As worship is encompassed by a way of life initiated by God, we are to be responsible conduits.

Worship then is not primarily about what we do, but instead, who we are because of our salvation through Jesus Christ, and a right relationship with God. It is the attitude of humility before a holy and righteous God. In this, God communicates to his people through the service of the word, and the people's right response is to take action producing a horizontal effect within the body of believers and outside the church.

Genuine worship is imperative to the life of the church. From it all pertinent activity flow. Within this perspective, the Worship Ministry's mission is to be sensitized to the way in which our worship is carried out, that it might touch the lives of the worshipping people and as a result reach out to a hurting world

As co-laborers with Christ, we stand ready to be firmly grounded in the message of the church fathers, yet aware of and concerned for new ways to respond to tradition while standing on God's word. In this, our genuine worship will bear fruit as "Kingdom Builders."

From the prospective of worship, may we humbly keep the following self analysis before us.

ACROSTIC PSALMS

- **P**osition: Am I in a spiritual position to hear God or am I too busy thinking about myself?
- **S**ubmission: Do I seek God's face with much fasting and prayer in submission to receive direction?
- **A** Heart Condition: Am I affected that my heart is opened for God's use?
- **L**ove: Do I have the kind of love for God and His people that moves me with compassion that I might offer the same grace that is afforded me of God?
- **M**oved by Faith: Am I prepared to move by faith in expectation with assurance even when I do not see the resources, and do not know the logistics?

Because genuine worship is central to the life of the church and out of this all manifested expressions flow, we, at the "Worship Ministry," humbly seek the participation of all members of our congregation to join with us, as there is one body in Christ.

Dedicated to serving Christ and the people of God.

Minister, Sandra Hadland

Chairperson: the Worship Ministry.

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Treasury Email Address: first.C@sbcglobal.net**

**7:30a.m. Worship ~ ~ 11:00a.m. Worship
9:15a.m. Sunday-School ~ ~ New Discipleship Class**

**First Baptist Church Worship Services are aired on
Cablevision Public Worship Access
Every Sunday in Bridgeport on Channel 88 at 10:30a.m.**

**2010 CHURCH THEME
"Casting the Vision –
A Church That Builds One Life At A Time"
Habakkuk 2:2-3**