

# A COMMUNITY AT WORSHIP

## Facilitators:

### Rev. Daniel Nicewonger

Dan is recently retired from *First Baptist Church of Kennett Square*. Dan has also served churches in Malden, MA, Cortland, NY, Springfield, MA. Since May of 2016, Dan has been fighting stage IV colon cancer. Helping congregations strengthen their worship ministry has been a focus of Dan's ministry. Newly retired Dan continues to help people encounter God in the midst of their everyday lives.

### Christopher Wells, Ph. D.,

Elder of Worship: *First Baptist Church of Kennett Square*

Chris 'Doc' Wells is Elder of Worship at First Baptist Church of Kennett Square. In over 25 years as a volunteer, Chris has led worship across denominations, with teams of various sizes, and with everything from a bassoon to a banjo or a Piano and a full pipe organ. Worship and seeing God's people grow as worshippers have been constants for most of his adult life. Professionally, Chris holds a Ph.D. in theoretical high energy physics from The Johns Hopkins University and works as an executive for Boston-based machine learning startup Indico Data.

Join Pastor Dan Nicewonger and Dr. Chris Wells as we reflect on the worship of our congregations. Dan and Chris believe that each congregation has a unique set of worship norms that shape how your community enters the presence of God. Understanding your congregation's unique worship norms will breathe new life into your worship services. This workshop will provide you with the tools and language to **discover** and **celebrate** your congregation's unique worship norms.

**Our goal is to present a way to think about worship that will bring about renewal in the most important thing our churches do.**

## SESSION 1: HOW WE THINK ABOUT WORSHIP

### WORSHIP IS "OUR THING"

- Spirit-inspired worship sets people of faith apart from the rest of the world.
- Everything else our churches do, teaching, service, children's ministry, music, dinners, fellowship, all of it can be found in other places in our communities...most times done better.
- Helping people connect with God through worship that captures the heart of the Psalmist, draws us to the foot of the cross, and ushers us into the throne room of heaven is our gift to the world.

Many of our conversations regarding worship focus on:

- Personal preferences ["I like"]
- The history of the community we worship in ["We don't do it that way"]
- Whether people are attending worship service ["People are not at worship..."]

Worship conversations driven by such language are, at best incomplete.

### YOUR CONGREGATION'S WORSHIP NORMS

Each congregation has a unique set of worship norms that fall within three categories. Thinking about worship in this way provides a more complete way to think about worship.

**practice** (what we do)

**culture** (the context in which we do it)

**theology** (who do we worship and what are the guiding principles for our culture and practice)

**Theology** speaks to how our understanding of God, scripture, and call to follow Jesus shape what we believe about worship?

**Culture** refers unique realities of your congregation, as well as the patterns, rhythms, and ways of worship your community has developed over time.

**Practice** acknowledges the practical realities of planning for and preparing a worship service. These are the nuts-and-bolts issues of ensuring there is a worship service for people to participate in each week.

## **SESSION II: DISCOVERING THE UNIQUE WORSHIP NORMS OF YOUR CONGREGATION**

Where to begin?

We will talk about how a congregation discerns the unique set of worship norms that guide their worship during this session.

As part of this session, Chris and Dan will talk about how to go about identifying and communicating your congregation's unique set of worship norms.

We will talk about gathering history, listening to people talk about worship within your congregation, and discerning God's invitation for future worship.

Dan and Chris will provide the tools so that any church can work through the steps of discerning its unique set of worship norms.

## **SESSION III: HELPING YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM AND CONGREGATION ADOPT A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT WORSHIP**

Now that you have identified your congregation's unique set of worship norms, what next?

Session III will focus on celebrating and teaching the worship norms to the entire congregation. Dan and Chris will provide ideas on working with:

Board Members / Leadership Team / Staff

Worship Leaders

Congregation

This session will focus on taking the ideas from sessions I and II and helping you find ways to apply them in your ministry context. We encourage you to come with specific questions and thoughts on working this way of thinking about worship in your congregation. Our goal is to facilitate a dialogue on seeing worship renewal with our congregations.