

## **FAQ – Greenville Oaks’ Worship Journey**

*As we prepare to launch a weekly instrumental worship service in February 2016, following are answers to many common questions.*

### **What about the loss of the beauty of the a cappella tradition?**

We will continue to offer excellent a cappella worship every Sunday. For many of us who grew up with this form of worship music, it most naturally engages our hearts in sincere worship. However, God also calls us to reach people who don’t already have a relationship with Jesus or a love of a cappella music. As new people come to faith in Christ and for our own younger people, we must provide worship settings that are more likely to naturally align with their musical heart language—so they can offer their sincere worship to God. Our personal heritage and emotional ties must not be allowed to trump the mission God has given us or hinder us from doing all we can to further that mission.

Again, we are not abandoning our a cappella tradition. We are committed to always have an a cappella worship service option. It is possible that the best way to preserve respect for and valuing of a cappella singing may be to stop requiring only a cappella singing.

### **Will the instrumental music discourage congregational singing?**

The truth is, there are instrumental churches where the singing and participation is better than many a cappella churches. There are also instrumental and a cappella churches where the singing and participation is very poor. The reality is that many in our a cappella services don't sing. For others, the use of instruments may actually encourage greater participation.

We value our long history of quality vocal music and recognize that it is the words we sing that make the music worship music. Therefore, we intend for our voices to remain dominant and to use the band primarily to accompany the singing.

### **Will we end up losing members to other churches?**

Our prayer is that no one will leave Greenville Oaks. We pray that all of our current members will embrace our mission and support the new instrumental worship service as an aid to “seeking all who need Jesus.” Again, there will always be an a cappella option. In the history of this church, we’ve lost members on other occasions because we made decisions that we believed were true to Scripture and our mission. The reality is: If we remain as just an a cappella church, we will also lose members; in fact, we already have.

### **What about relationships with other Churches of Christ? What will other churches think?**

We value our relationships with sister congregations, but do not believe that can be the primary influence for our decisions at Greenville Oaks. However, we are confident that most Churches of Christ in our area will be supportive. We know other churches are studying this issue and considering adding instrumental worship offerings. In fact, recently another metroplex church asked if we could share our experience with them.

### **Will this cause us to lose our sense of identity?**

A cappella singing has been a traditional identity marker for Churches of Christ. We value our a cappella tradition, but our identity needs to be in Jesus not in a style of worship music. We believe this change will strengthen our identity as a church that cares more about those who are not yet members than any one style of music.

### **What will my parents, family members, friends, etc. think?**

We recognize this question may be very real and painful for some. Many of us and our parents were taught that instrumental music in worship is wrong. There will be struggle with this change. But personal challenges are not a reason to place constraints on things the Bible does not constrain. We encourage you to show honor to family members, and to those who have gone before us. Bathe those conversations in prayer; honor them.

We must have the courage to do in the 21<sup>st</sup> century what our forefathers did in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. There are none of us here today who come from families who were always members of Churches of Christ. That can be said that with complete confidence because Churches of Christ did not exist more than 100 to 200 years ago. The Restoration Movement became the fastest growing Christian group in America, and powerfully impacted the nation. To do what they did, men and women had to say, "What God calls us to do is more important than going along with how our parents and grandparents understood things. And we are more committed to what honors God and reaches the lost than any other things." They had those difficult conversations with their families. And because of their faith and courage, we have the heritage we love today. But we honor that heritage best when we are willing to make the same kinds of courageous decisions today. *REFERENCE ROMANS 14-15*

### **When will the Sunday morning instrumental service begin? What time will it be?**

Beginning Sunday, February 28, 2016, our second service will use instrumental accompaniment. The Sunday schedule will be:

- 8:30 to 9:35 – First service (A cappella)
- 15 minutes to transition from worship to class
- 9:50 to 10:45 – Classes (and set up for second service)
- 15 minutes to transition from class to worship
- 11:00 to 12:05 – Second service (Instrumental)

### **Why are we doing this now?**

Greenville Oaks' leadership has been working on this for years; this is not a new idea. The intent to add an instrumental service was announced in December 2013. After significant study, prayer, discernment, planning, and preparation we decided that now is the time to take this step.

### **What exactly has God called us to do?**

God calls us (individually and as a church body) to go boldly as His ambassadors to a fallen and broken world. We are here to clearly demonstrate God's ministry of reconciliation - how He restores relationships between Himself and His creation and enables healthy relationships between one another.

*REFERENCE 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. See [GO BOLDLY Action Plan](#).*

**Why do we want to do this?**

For those who not yet here - We desire to be a culturally relevant church that recognizes the needs of people in our community and seeks to meet those needs by sharing the Good News with all that do not know it.

For ourselves - We desire to meet a growing need and desire within our church for more contemporary and relevant worship styles and experiences.

For the future - We must recognize obvious changes in our culture and provide the younger generations and the future generations with worship experiences that engage and enable their hearts to worship.

**Will the instruments be visible on stage during the a cappella service?**

We are working on a way (screenings, stage remodel, etc.) to keep the instruments from being obviously displayed during the a cappella service. We may not be able to guarantee that they will not be seen, but we want to do our best to minimize any distraction that could be caused by seeing instruments during a cappella worship services.

**Additional Q&As related to why we are offering an instrumental service:****Is it biblically acceptable to worship God in the assembly of the church with singing that is accompanied by instruments?**

In December 2013, based on additional study, prayer and careful discernment our elders confirmed the understanding that Greenville Oaks has held for many years.

- The New Testament writers simply do not address the use or non-use of instrumental accompaniment in worship.
- Jesus never addressed the form or style of music in worship.
- Scholars disagree on the meaning of the Greek words for sing (adō and psallō). Most do not claim that “sing” meant “sing only.”
- The New Testament offers very little direction on how the church is to worship. Of the New Testament scriptures that reference singing, only one (1 Cor. 14:26) is in the context of a church worship gathering. That scripture references people singing solos to the congregation. There is actually no New Testament reference to congregational singing.
- Although the New Testament does not tell us, we know from other historical records that the early church used a cappella music in their worship gatherings. There are several theories about why the early church used a cappella music, but we really do not know why. We trust that they exercised the same freedom we have today to worship in ways that were authentic and meaningful to them.
- Our continued, honest study of God’s word and our high regard for the authority of scripture (over church history and tradition) compels us to recognize that scripture does not require or prohibit instrumental accompaniment as we sing.

- We have great respect for any whose conviction calls them to worship with a cappella singing only, and would not ask anyone with that conviction to do otherwise.
- We are convinced that what matters is that we worship God with a sincere heart. That can happen with either a cappella or instrumental worship.
- Therefore, we continue to believe it is biblically acceptable to sing worship songs with or without instrumental accompaniment.

### **Is it missionally beneficial for Greenville Oaks to offer an instrumental worship option in addition to a cappella?**

As we move forward, we will do whatever is needed to accomplish our mission and achieve our vision objectives. In that context, we believe offering an instrumental worship option will be a helpful way to connect with people (a number of our current members and others) who relate to instrumental music better than a cappella.

### **Studies have shown that worship and musical style are not important factors in reaching those outside of the church. Shouldn't we focus on things that actually draw people to Jesus?**

Your elders have absolutely no expectation that providing contemporary instrumental or, for that matter, a cappella worship will, by itself, draw unbelievers to Jesus. That's not the purpose of worship services.

Yes, we must focus on deeply loving and caring for people in ways that demonstrate that life with Jesus is far superior to life without him. Once we actually show Jesus to others, we need to also show our love by helping them express their worship in ways that are authentically natural for them (a cappella will not be the natural choice of most new converts).

It is doubtful that the decision to not require Gentiles to be circumcised actually drew unbelievers to Jesus, but we know the requirement to be circumcised made coming to Christ, at least, very difficult. Leading people to Christ must not require converting them to an a cappella only worship style.

### **Plenty of churches have contemporary instrumental worship, why do we need to copy them?**

We don't need to copy anyone, however, we can certainly learn from churches that are successfully reaching the lost. Nearly all churches that are really connecting with and reaching the lost have contemporary instrumental worship. Their worship style is not why they are reaching the lost, but we cannot overlook that it is one of the factors that enables their outreach to successfully connect with the culture. It does not make sense for us to require our tradition or preference for a cappella praise on those who would like to be a part of Greenville Oaks but prefer to worship with instrumental accompaniment.

Additionally, after many of our young people graduate from college and return to our area, they do not return to Greenville Oaks. Instead, they attend churches that have contemporary instrumental worship. We need to offer a place for young people to grow and mature in their spiritual journey. For many, a prerequisite for that includes vibrant instrumental worship experiences.

**For years Greenville Oaks has wonderfully demonstrated that a Church of Christ doesn't have to carry much of the legalistic baggage of the 1950s and 60s. That has been a great blessing to many Church of Christ members in our area. Why would we want to throw away our ability to minister to traditional Church of Christ members for the hope that instrumental worship will draw people to Christ?**

The addition of a contemporary instrumental worship option does not have to have any impact on our ability to minister to people who prefer a cappella worship. We will continue to provide a cappella worship.

It is our heritage as a unity movement from 200 years ago and our Greenville Oaks specific heritage of highly regarding the authority of scripture and the power of God's grace and freedom that naturally extends to a desire to serve people with additional worship styles – styles that differ from our tradition. We have the opportunity to demonstrate the best of our tradition by all of us fully loving those who worship a cappella and those who worship with instruments. This is one way we can show, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you **love** one another." John 13:35

Offering a contemporary instrumental worship option is not intended to draw unbelievers to Christ. It is intended to provide a worship setting that is more relevant for those whose hearts do not resonate with a cappella.

**Isn't worship supposed to be sincere heartfelt praise to God, not entertainment?**

What really matters is a sincere heart. We don't believe the form or style of music matters to God. The only importance of the form and style of music is its ability to connect and engage our hearts in sincere expressions of our worship to God. The attitude of a person's heart is personal. While a cappella music engages many of us in worship, we respect and value the fact that singing with a contemporary band engages other people. Any venue with a band may feel like a concert and, therefore, be viewed as entertainment by some people. But many of us have also witnessed people singing their hearts out in very heartfelt praise to God with a worship band. We cannot judge what connects with someone else's heart.