

Unificationists Gather to Discuss the Topic of Worship within our Community

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Practicing for worship service

Last month, a small group of young Unificationists gathered in Lancaster Gate to study, discuss and explore the topic of worship.

The Premise

Having grown up in the Unification church community, going to Sunday Services and singing songs, then later on in life, finding myself passionate about music, I found myself involved in organising the very services I used to attend. I had fairly little and vague guidance from the community on how to conduct worship services, and I myself had too few of my own experiences to fully understand the meaning behind the tradition [of worship].

In order to help inform myself, I looked into communities that were similar to ours; in the sense of meeting on a Sunday to sing and receive a message/sermon. This, of course, brought me to traditional Christian Sunday (worship) Services. Through experiencing these services, I understood that what we were doing was worshipping our Heavenly Parent through song, something that is both profound and deep. If we can develop our understanding of worship, it will better inform us as to how we go about conducting it on a Sunday.

If we are to understand the meaning of the word "worship" which means "to give value to" something or someone, then by definition it seems to be part of our human nature to worship. This being the case, we should pay attention and be intentional in how and what we worship. This is what inspired me to organise these "Exploring Worship Evenings".



Worship service at the recent Young Adults Retreat.



So, what did we do?

For our inaugural meeting, we invited William Haines – our Education Department Director – to come and share his thoughts and give some content on this topic [of worship]. He started by briefly reiterating the meaning and history of worship, how it is in our nature as human beings to do so and the methods by which we do so include song, dance, art and gifts (sacrifices).

He quoted an interesting observation made by Charles Murray in his book "Human Accomplishment": the most historically enduring musicians, artists and writers have carried out their work in the name of God. It would seem that people have generally been the most successful in cultures where people have believed that the universe has a transcendental meaning.

Looking back at our own community and our own Sunday Services, the most common understanding is that we sing to "create the atmosphere" in order to receive a message, or in other cases it has just become an act of "going through the motions", which results in poor song choices and a lack of deeper meaning and value.

William Haines then read with us some verses from Psalms that clearly highlight how we should worship and praise God. He also highlighted how in the book of Amos it states: "I hate your religious festivals... Stop your noisy songs." The point being that the people at this time were worshipping on the sabbath, singing praises to God but in their daily lives they were committing terrible sins. In addition to this, he also pointed out that in the First Commandment it says, "Thou shall have no other Gods before me", not that we should have no other Gods. Therefore, we should worship each other and creation, in so doing by giving them value and treating them well, just not before praising God.

Conclusions

From this our group understood first how we worship, that our liturgy and song choices are important, but also that it is not just about Sunday; we should worship through our whole lives.

This is a brief summary of the evening of course, there was much more to our discussions. Overall, those who attended found it helpful in guiding their own approach to worship, in how they think about worship and in how to lead their congregation on a Sunday.

Our next meeting will be held on Thursday 24th of October in 43 Lancaster Gate at 7pm, please get in touch (with Réamonn) if you'd like to come along.

I'd also love to know if you have any thoughts on the topics raised, so please leave them in the comments below.



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