Redemption Community Church
Church Practice Distinctives
Adapted from 9 Marks Ministries

Everything we are about to discuss will be characterized as distinctives at Redemption Community, but it doesn’t necessarily mean that it should be distinctive. Each of these areas of ministry are biblical, therefore they should be areas of ministry, in every church, that claims Christ as its leader and the Bible as its rule of faith.

I. Corporate Prayer

What’s the difference between individual prayer and corporate prayer?

Of course both are significantly important, but concerning individual prayer, I am simply responding to God myself—my own knowledge of him, my relationship with him, my experience with him. In corporate prayer, when someone speaks to pray for a whole group of people, then the person praying has to think not just for himself or herself but they have to think, “What does this local church need to praise God for in this moment, thank him for, confess and ask him for right now?”

So practically, if you’re the person leading that prayer, pray "We," not "I." You may occasionally pray "I," but generally you should pray "we" because you’re representing yourself and all those other people before the Lord corporately.

“Pray then in this way: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” ~Matthew 6.9

What are the aspects of corporate prayer at Redemption Community Church?

At Redemption Community Church we will have a time where everyone will have opportunity to intentionally pray to our heavenly Father. These times of prayer will consist of:

- a prayer of praise (which is focused on some aspect of God),
- a prayer of confession (where we confess our sins),
- a prayer of intercession (where we pray through various concerns that we have as a church family)
- a prayer of thanks (where we express our gratitude that our Father hears us)

So what are some of the benefits of corporate prayer?

1. It Advances God's Kingdom in the Face of Opposition

First, corporate prayer is important because God uses prayer together to advance his kingdom in the face of opposition. The early church had a number of obstacles to overcome, including persecution. In spite of persecution, it continued to expand. How?
We learn that the early church gathered regularly for prayer. In Acts chapter 2 verses 42 to 44, Luke writes,

“They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common.”  ~ Acts 2.42, 44

As a result—verse 47—"the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved." Yet this growth often occurred in the face of persecution, which we see several times (in the New Testament).

2. It Displays Our Dependence On God

Second, God is glorified through our dependence on him in united prayer.

That dependence is particularly striking when God's people gather together to praise his name, confess their sins, and make their requests known to him. Why? Because such prayer clearly displays our dependence on God to a watching world, it expresses audibly our needs in a powerful way.

In corporate prayer we show our utter dependence to God as a church.

3. It Builds Our Unity

Third, God is glorified through the unity of our prayer.

We have always had as our focus at Redemption Community that unity among God's people glorifies God. That's why Paul calls on the entire church in Ephesians 4 to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Praying together is one way that we satisfy this command—it visibly unites us together as God's people.

But there's also a special unity through corporate prayer aside from the unity displayed in the physical gathering. When Holy-Spirit-indwelt Christians come together to pray, there is a unique kind of unity and power in the Spirit. Not only do we commune with God, we can trust that a special communion occurs with each other as the Spirit works in us simultaneously and gives a common faith and heart for God's will.

Here's the main point

Participating regularly in corporate prayer begins to take out the individualistic assumption that Christianity is only about me and my relationship with God; and it begins to change us as individual Christians in the congregation so that we become aware of this person who's sick, this person
who’s just had a baby, this person who’s unemployed, this person who’s just become a Christian. Participating in corporate prayer helps us discover that our lives as followers of Christ are tied up with each other’s lives. It helps us discover how God cares about the congregation as an entity—that it should be marked by the fruit of the Spirit and the love for what Jesus said in John 13:34-35.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

~John 13.34-35

That’s not how Christians in America normally talk. You hear about "my own spiritual desires and demands"; you don’t really hear about the local congregation’s desires and demands. But regularly participating in corporate prayer reintroduces these ideas and reorients our thinking. Given how central prayer is to our lives as Christians, it makes sense that prayer is a vital part of building unity in our church.

II. Corporate Singing

At Redemption Community we value the moment where we all gather together for the purpose of singing songs to God. Singing songs together, as a whole church, forges unity around distinctively Christian doctrine and practice. This is not performance based, therefore we do not ‘practice’ just sitting, listening and watching people sing during our worship services no matter how talented they may be.

We do value the unique musical abilities of those in our congregation, but we desire to let those talents be used in a way that enhances all of our corporate singing time together. As Mark Dever says, “In our overly individualized culture, congregational singing is one of the most visible ways to encourage a specifically corporate emphasis to our worship and life as a local church body. It steers clear of the entertainment trap precisely by involving the whole people of God in the active praise of God, responding vocally to His goodness and grace with audible praise and thanksgiving. “

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”

~ Colossians 3.16

Therefore, we want to sing songs, as a whole congregation, that raise our view of God, that present Him in all His glory and grace. We want to sing songs that put the details of Christ’s person and work front and center. We want to sing theological songs that make us think about the depths of God’s character, the contours of His grace, and the implications of His Gospel; that teach us about the biblical doctrine that saves and transforms.

What we want to encourage, then, is a marked priority and emphasis on the congregation actually singing together, both in unity and in harmony, so that God is honored by our active corporate participation in musical worship, and so that we can hear each other and be edified ourselves.
III. Discipleship/Mentoring

This distinctive of discipleship is one that is becoming more and more highlighted and emphasized in the American church today. One reason may be that many people who are in leadership positions have been handed the baton of faith and have been given the opportunity to lead, but have become frustrated in their pursuit to shepherd Christ's church, because of the lack of discipleship and training that they personally have received.

With that said, many of the leaders in churches today are persevering to equip the next generation with the biblical mandate to ‘make disciples’ who in turn will then ‘make disciples’ as well. It’s been said that, every Christian should be discipling someone or they themselves should be discipled or should be doing both.

Here at Redemption Community we place a high emphasis on the well-known biblical mandate from Jesus found in Matthew’s gospel:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” ~ Matthew 28.19-20

We can further see the strategy for disciple making in some of Paul’s letters. Second Timothy chapter 2 gives us a clear understanding of the biblical strategy for practicing this.

“And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also.” ~ 2 Timothy 2.2

We see, in this one verse, the generational impact of investing our lives into people one at a time. It is a spiritual legacy for the spread of the gospel as well as the purity and leadership of the local church.

“And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ”

~ Ephesians 4.11-12

This is what Redemption Community Church longs to see become a reality. We want to see every mature Christian in Christ intentionally investing their lives into one younger Christian at a time. We want to see every mature man in Christ investing his life into the younger men in our church. We want to see every mature lady in Christ investing her life into the younger ladies in our church. This all helps to increase the gospel, as well as build up the body of Christ at Redemption Community Church to maturity and to give a testimony to the world of our faithfulness to Christ.

“And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ.” ~ Colossians 1.28

“Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, that they may train the young women to
love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind,
being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.”

~ Titus 2.3-5