

Contemporary and Alternative Worship

Convener: The Rev. Nelson Cowan (ncowan@bu.edu) is director of the Center for Worship and the Arts at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama.

Members in Attendance: Adam Perez, Emily Snider Andrews, Glenn Stallsmith, Jim Marriot, Jonathan Ottaway, Lester Ruth, Nelson Cowan, Nicholas Zork, Noel Snyder, Sarah Kathleen Johnson

Visitors in Attendance: Anneli Loepp Thiessen, Clayton Faulkner, John Hermanson, Maren Haynes Marchesini, Sungguk Park

Description of Work: The members of and visitors to this seminar track historical and theological developments in contemporary worship (seeker services, praise-and-worship services, convergence worship, “blended” services, and alternative services and paradigms for worship). We research particular faith communities’ worship, as well as the general trends in worship and music styles, liturgical art, architecture, and seminary education for those preparing to become worship leaders in these worship settings, Protestant and Catholic.

Papers and Presentations:

- Nelson Cowan & Adam Perez, Short Communication: Introducing the Journal of *Praise & Worship* (JPW).
- Jim Marriot: “Inside-Out Liturgical Practices in LCMS Contexts.”
- Anneli Loepp Thiessen: “‘She shouldn’t be talking so much’: Women’s Musical Authority and the History of Contemporary Worship.”
- Lester Ruth: “A Eucharist That’s Truly Eucharistic: Emphasizing Corporate Praising as a Way to Elevate the Place of the Lord’s Supper in Pentecostal Congregations.”
- Alydia Smith: “What We Will Sing When We Sing a New Song: The Theological Framework of *Then Let Us Sing!*”
- Maren Haynes Marchesini & John Hermanson: “Are the Morning Stars Still Singing? Supporting New Hymnody in Bozeman, Montana.”
- Emily Snider Andrews, Nelson Cowan, and Sarah Kathleen Johnson: “Understanding Young Worshipers through Mixed Methods Research: Introducing the Young People and Christian Worship (YPCW) Study.”
- Glenn Stallsmith: “Congregational Intercessions and Contemporary Worship: A History of Incompatibility.”

- Jonathan Ottaway: “Dipping a Ladle in the Cauldron of Story: Assessing Worship Leadership as Gospel Narration.”
- Adam Perez: “An Update on CCLI for Future Research.”

Other Work and Plans for the Future: The 2026 meeting will be Nelson Cowan’s final year as convener and we will elect a new convener. We will also continue the rhythm of offering select papers for pre-reading. For 2026, we are considering a field trip for the Atlanta location and/or inviting prominent worship leaders in the area to speak with our group.