

*Worshipping
the
Korean way...*

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Perhaps no other Christians in the world worship God more often than the Korean Christians. The Protestant Churches of Korea have grown so rapidly due to their frequent worship services. However, just as when we are inundated with water, the most needed thing is pure water itself to drink, so our Korean Churches are sometimes lacking genuine worship. Korean protestant churches, very strongly influenced by the American puritan or pietistic movement, have neglected aspects of our Christian liturgical tradition and biblical worship. Use of the “lectionary”, for example, and celebrating seasons of the Christian calendar has become unfamiliar in Korean churches.

It is time that a new liturgical renewal movement should take place in Korean protestant churches. Nevertheless there are ways worship is significantly enriching the spiritual lives of Korean Christians. The early morning daily prayer services at 5.30a.m. continue to occur in Korean congregations in Australia.

The following are the unique services that are traditionally observed by Korean churches.

Song Gu Young Shin (Farewell to the Last Year and Greetings to New Year)

It has been traditionally observed by the Korean churches. We have this service at midnight of December 31. Till midnight, everybody gathers together according to age groups or different cell groups, and plays Yoot-game. In this service, we have time to reflect on the last year and seek for God’s forgiveness and mercy for what we have done wrong, and then to make New Year’s resolutions before God. We used to prepare prayer lists and burn them before the altar. After this service, we used to have table communion with T’uk-guk (rice-cake soup).

Eo Rin E Joo (Children’s Sunday)

This is a unique service of the Korean churches. It is related to the Children’s Day (May 5) which was established by the great teacher, Bang, Jung Hwan. It is through worship with children in this service that parents have a very special opportunity to convey Christian faith to the next generation. The Church used to prepare gift packs and give them to all the children attending that service. This is a very special service for children,

because it has significant objectives of Christian education for them. The most commonly used verses of the Bible on this Sunday are Mat 18:3~4.

Eo Beo E Joo (Parents’ Sunday)

We have this special service for our parents on the Sunday near May 8 (Parents’ Day), in which we thank our parents that they gave birth to us and brought us up with their sacrifice. This service is in perfect harmony with our traditional culture and custom based upon Confucism in which we are taught to respect our parents. The youth prepare carnations and wait for parents, especially the aged, in front of the Church. They pin carnations on their jackets. It is in and through this service that we express our thankfulness to our parents and our gratitude for the grace of God the Father. The most frequently used verse of the Bible on this service is Deut 5:16.

Kwang Bok Jeol Gam Sa Joo

(Sunday to thank God for Korean Independence)

Korea has been under Japanese colonization for 36 years. August 15 is the Korean Independence Day. On Sunday near this day, we have a very special service to celebrate our independence from our bondage. This service symbolizes the Exodus event. It is through this service that we thank to God for his delivering us from Japanese colonization and anticipate the day of unification of our people, South and North Korea. We place the national flag on the altar and sing our national anthem at the end of this service.

Chu Soo Gam Sa Joo (Korean Thanksgiving Day)

Korean Christianity was planted by American missionaries, so that Thanksgiving Service naturally was observed by the Korean Churches. In recent times, however, the Korean churches began to realize that we should have Korean thanksgiving service not on the day set by the American churches, but on Choo Suk (Harvest Thanksgiving Day, August 15 of Lunar Year) which is our own traditional day of thanksgiving for harvest. Along this line, we sing hymns accompanied by our traditional musical instruments. Sometimes, we sing new hymns composed according to our traditional tunes.