

MUSIC AT SYCAMORE VIEW CHURCH OF CHRIST  
BRIEF THEOLOGIC STATEMENT

*(shared publicly on February 20, 2011)*

1. The Sycamore View Church of Christ honors its heritage and tradition of *a cappella* congregational singing.
2. We will continue *a cappella* congregational singing in current and existing Sunday morning auditorium assemblies.
3. While we enjoy and will continue *a cappella* congregational assemblies, we do not find a biblical foundation to denounce those who practice otherwise.

**Position Paper on Music at Sycamore View Church of Christ**  
**Theological Perspectives**

1. The Sycamore View Church of Christ honors it's a *cappella* heritage. Our church tradition has long maintained a strong (and usually exclusive) a *cappella* practice.
2. Our heritage of a *cappella* congregational singing focuses on its participatory nature. We sing with our own voices—created by God; we sing as a community—joining the assembly of angels and saints around the throne of God; and we sing moved by the Spirit of God who fills our hearts with praise—making melody in our hearts to the Lord. The simplicity and focus of a *cappella* congregational singing, which we have uniquely honored, is still admittedly inferential and dependent upon a particular, though historic, way of reading certain texts in the New Testament.
3. Given our heritage and long practice, the introduction of instrumental music into our current and existing Sunday assemblies would possibly be divisive, disruptive, and distracting to some. It would possibly violate some sincere consciences, potentially disrupt the harmony of the community, and thus distract us from the goal of helping people see Jesus. Therefore, we will continue a *cappella* congregational singing in current and existing Sunday morning auditorium assemblies.
4. We recognize that many in Churches of Christ have thought and practiced a *cappella* music as a gospel requirement. While we enjoy and will continue having Sunday a *cappella* assemblies, we do not regard those who practice otherwise as outside the kingdom of God. We do not regard the use of instrumental music, even in the Sunday assembly, a matter of fellowship or salvation, or “gospel truth”.
  - a. The gospel is the good news of the kingdom of God enacted by the ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ. The gospel is essential for Christian fellowship but other issues, such as the style of music in the assembly, is secondary.
  - b. We recognize that those who desire to use instrumental music can root some of their thinking in the biblical record (e.g., such music is present in Israel as in Psalm 150 and God's throne room as pictured in Revelation 4). We also recognize that those who reject the use of instrumental music as a matter of conscience root some of their thinking in the silence of the biblical record (e.g.,

there are no references to the use of instruments among assembled Christians in Acts or the Epistles while there is explicit reference to singing).

- c. The differences between Christians on this question are usually based on (a) how Christian assemblies are regulated and (b) whether silence means prohibition. While there is legitimate room for disagreement about how to understand these principles, neither demands that we must consider a *cappella* music a matter of faithfulness to the gospel or fellowship in the gospel.
  - i. Concerning the former, we believe our assemblies should be regulated by the gospel—they should declare the gospel, embody the gospel, and experience the gospel. But we do not believe the New Testament was intended to give specific ritual legislation as if it were literature like Leviticus.
  - ii. Concerning the latter, the application of silence involves such ambiguity that it is difficult to sustain a consistent application of the principle (e.g., Scripture is silent about bible classes, multiple cups for communion, buildings built with money from the congregation's treasury, baptisms in the assembly as well as instrumental music in Christian assemblies).
  - iii. Even while some among us may still believe that a *cappella* music is the most biblical, authentic, and faithful way to worship God, it is not a "gospel truth". It is a truth like "All food is clean" (something both Jesus and Paul taught), that is, a truth that is neither a test of fellowship nor a demand for uniformity. Indeed, we should bear with our different consciences on this matter (Romans 14:1-15:7) and accept each other.
5. The gospel demands that we faithfully proclaim the fullness of God in Jesus Christ, embody the gospel in our daily lives, and retell in word and deed the gospel story in our assemblies. We do not believe that either a *cappella* or instrumental musical style is necessary to that proclamation, embodiment, and retelling. But we do believe the gospel demands that we practice mutual forbearance with each other so that a united community might authentically declare the gospel for the sake of those who do not know Jesus. Since this is not a matter of gospel truth, then the gospel calls us to mutual forbearance.