

Bridging Traditional and Contemporary Worship

Fusion Plenary 2

Led by DeAndre Johnson and Jackson Henry

OVERVIEW & PURPOSE

Conversations about “traditional” and “contemporary” worship often become conversations about preference, identity, and even power. But beneath differences in musical style, instrumentation, language, and liturgical form is a deeper theological conviction: the Holy Spirit is not confined to one expression of worship. Both historic and modern forms can carry the church’s prayer, proclaim the gospel, form disciples, and awaken people to the presence of God.

In this plenary, participants will explore how pastors and worship leaders can move their congregations beyond competition between worship styles toward greater trust, generosity, and shared mission. Together, we will examine the assumptions behind our labels, consider the relationship between worship leadership and congregational power, identify essential conversations for building trust, and develop a more generous planning process that honors both the gifts of the tradition and the creativity of the present.

The goal is not simply to create a service that contains “a little bit of everything,” but to cultivate a worshipping community capable of recognizing and receiving the work of the Spirit through forms that may not always be its first preference.

OBJECTIVES

1. Name the gifts and limitations of “traditional” and “contemporary” worship categories and articulate a theological framework that recognizes the potential for Spirit-led vitality within both.
2. Identify dynamics of power, preference, and trust that shape staffing and congregational conversations about worship and employ practices that move communities from competition toward mutual generosity.
3. Apply a generous worship-planning process that draws intentionally from historic and contemporary resources while prioritizing theological coherence, congregational formation, engagement, and mission over stylistic preference.

OUTLINE

1. Defining terms: what do we mean by traditional vs. contemporary? - 10min
2. Redefining the congregation’s relationship to power and trust - 10min
3. Convening Conversations for Bridging Trust - 5min
4. A Generous Planning Process - 15min
5. Q&A - 10min