

Ministry Microphone FAQ

In January of 2020, we are going to begin having a “ministry microphone” at the front of the auditorium during our worship services. While we’ve shared about this plan in recent sermons, we thought it’d be helpful to share some common questions, and corresponding answers, to help clarify the why’s and how’s of the ministry microphone.

Why are we going to have a ministry microphone?

In the New Testament, we see that when a church gathers for worship, various members of the congregation are encouraged to share words that edify and build up the church. Priority is to be given in worship gatherings to reading Scripture, preaching Scripture, praying, singing, and practicing the ordinances; but there are also other types of verbal sharing that are mentioned and encouraged (see 1 Corinthians 14:26, e.g.). We would like to provide a means by which those other types of gifts (prophecy, e.g.) could be exercised, while operating within biblical parameters.

What type of words can be shared at the ministry microphone?

Various types of “words” could potentially be shared with the congregation at the ministry microphone. Based on the verse mentioned above (1 Corinthians 14:26), we would potentially allow members to share things such as prophetic words or the interpretation of a tongue. But we also would allow the reading of Scripture itself, or even the sharing of lyrics of a hymn or song that members feel prompted by the Spirit to share.

Note: to understand what we mean (and what we understand the Bible to mean) by “prophecy” and “tongues,” you can listen to our sermons on those two topics from our “Building Up” series on the church website.

Who will be overseeing the ministry microphone?

The elders of our church bear a unique responsibility for overseeing the life of the congregation and ensuring that all we do in our worship gatherings brings honor to Christ. At least one or two elders will always be at the ministry microphone to talk with anyone who feels led to share. They will be the ones to make decisions about what will be allowed to be shared, and when.

Who is allowed to share at the ministry microphone?

Only those who are official members of the church will be allowed to share at the ministry microphone. This will ensure that those who are sharing are known by the pastors to be people who believe the gospel, submit to the Scriptures, and love our church (see the need for love of the body in 1 Corinthians 13). Paul says that all things should “be done decently and in order” in our gatherings (1 Corinthians 14:40); and this is one means by which to help ensure that all that is shared is honoring to Christ and in step with the gospel.

Are women allowed to share at the ministry microphone?

Yes. This question is prompted by 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, where Paul says that women should be “silent” in the gathering of the church. Pastor Marc explained the elders’ interpretation of this text in his sermon called “The Gathering and the Gifts.” In essence, Paul is prohibiting a *specific kind of speech*—that is, the public testing and weighing of prophecies. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul actually gives direction about *how* women should pray and prophesy in gatherings. Therefore, we will allow and encourage women to use their gifts in sharing in these ways. This is not a contradiction of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 either, since the gifts that would be exercised at the ministry microphone would not be ones of “teaching or exercising authority.”

How will people indicate their desire to potentially share at the ministry microphone?

This could be done one of two ways—depending on if they are feeling led to share *spontaneously* on Sunday morning, or if it is a prompting well *in advance* (both of which could be legitimate promptings of the Spirit). If someone feels compelled to share something well in advance of the gathering (earlier that week, perhaps), we would encourage him or her to share that with one of the elders prior to Sunday morning, in writing. They could then process this together and share their evaluation with the person before the service even begins—as to whether or not to allow it to be shared. If however, the prompting of the Holy Spirit is spontaneous, they should quietly make their way to the ministry microphone area and to the elder(s) who are overseeing it that morning. Though this is not mandated, if they are able to write down a few thoughts on paper or a digital device before they come to the microphone, that would be helpful in the evaluation process. They then will be invited to quietly share that with the elder, who can then process it with the other elder(s) and let them know what they have decided.

How will the elders decide what will be allowed to be shared?

There are various criteria which the elders will consider when determining whether or not to allow a member to share. In part, those criteria will depend upon what “type” of word is being evaluated. But in general, they will be considering questions such as the following:

- Is it consistent with Scripture?
- Does it have ability to edify, encourage, and console?
- Is it concise and clear, and could it be delivered that way publicly?
- What is its theme, and how does it fit with other elements of the gathering?
- Does it seem to be intended for the whole church?

How many “words” would be potentially shared in a worship service?

The apostle Paul was very clear that in the context of corporate worship, for the sake of orderliness and decency, that the sharing of words such as these should be limited in number to two or three (1 Corinthians 14:27-33). We will honor this biblical boundary, receiving it as a wise restriction from the same God who gives these gifts. There may be Sundays where there are no words shared at the ministry microphone, but there will never be weeks where more than three words are shared.

How would the gift of tongues potentially be exercised in a worship gathering?

In our cultural context, this question requires the most nuanced and complex answer. To begin, tongues are a gift from the Holy Spirit, of which there are various forms. While the Spirit can give utterance in known human languages for the sake of gaining an ear for the gospel’s proclamation (Acts 2, e.g.), He also can give utterance in languages that are unknown to the speaker or hearers, apart from the additional gift of interpretation. These types of tongues are typically directed toward God, and their content will usually be prayer, praise, and thanksgiving (1 Corinthians 14:2, 13-16). Paul says that these tongues should not be forbidden from being spoken in the gathering, but insists that if they are, they *must* be accompanied by interpretation in the language of the hearers (1 Corinthians 14:27-28, 39).

So, if a member feels compelled that the content of the tongue he is speaking should be shared with the congregation, he should not speak it out loud from his seat, but rather go to the ministry microphone and make his desire known to the elder(s) there. The elders will then seek to determine if there is an interpretation to be shared. This could come from the person himself (as 1 Corinthians 14:13 implies), though that seems to be the exception. More likely though, it could be that another member of the congregation felt compelled by the Spirit with an interpretation, and he comes to the elder(s) to share that. Regardless, the elders would be looking to hear if the interpretation is biblical, directed toward God rather than the church (see 1 Corinthians 14:2), Christ-honoring, and clear—and if it has the potential of edifying the church. If all those criteria apply, the elders would potentially allow the interpretation of the tongue to be shared (not the tongue itself). The hearing of the tongue itself would not be so important as the hearing of the interpretation. If no interpretation comes, or if the elders deem that it’s not fitting (for criteria mentioned earlier in this document), they would simply encourage the person to return to his seat and pray quietly from there (see 1 Corinthians 14:28).