

I remember walking into church as a child and careening around the congregation to get a glimpse of the wooden board that hung on the front wall. “Hymns for the Day” it said, and below were carefully placed page numbers of our playlist for the next hour. Someone chose those songs. Someone practiced those songs. Someone slid the numbers into place on the wooden board. Someone typed up those transparencies. There was always a “someone”.

One doesn't have to look far to find articles, blogs, and interviews with various kinds of worship experts who help you make wise decisions about what you should and should not sing, and why. Rubrics and extensive vetting systems have been designed, all with the end goal of curating a healthy song diet for your particular congregation. As the options available continue to grow, with hundreds of new worship songs released each month, we need as many tools as possible in our toolbelt as we sit down to plan next Sunday's service.

The difficulty lies in the fact that worship is contextual and every congregation is different. You're not making wise choices for the church down the road. You are selecting songs for your church, your people. What you say “yes” to because it is a congregational heart song, someone else says “no” to because it's problematic lyrically or melodically. Every congregation is different (praise God), and every congregation will have, and NEED different songs that form their faith and lift their voice in worship each week.

Twice a year, CCLI (Christian Copyright Licensing International), puts out a Top 100 list with the most sung/reported songs. This isn't limited to one denomination or one geographic area - it's meant to be comprehensive. It shows trends, demonstrates clicks and downloads, and gives a visual representation of what worship sounds like broadly in churches around the world. In 2015 a team from the United Methodist Church began a [CCLI Top 100 vetting project](#). They looked at each song individually, putting it through their own extensive vetting process, resulting in a document that contains recommendations for UMC churches to consider. When their final data was released, the Center for Congregational Song [invited other denominations](#) to follow suit and create vetting documents for their own churches.

Below you will find the work of a team of Reformed worship leaders, pastors, and theologians who vetted the Top 100 list published in early 2024. In our first meeting, we talked extensively about criteria and Reformed distinctives for how we would analyze songs. Within our small team, we quickly realized the diversity in worship practices and styles in our settings was going to pose unique challenges. Every song has strengths and opportunities, and we greatly respect the prayerful and Spirit-led decisions made across our tradition each week as worship planners get to work. So instead of a simple “sing this/don't sing this” approach, we humbly submit this document that contains things we think should be taken into consideration from a *formative* perspective. Worship is faith formative and singing is faith formative. Over time, what we sing and what we

say in worship forms us. It doesn't happen in a single Sunday or a single song, but gradually over time as songs take root in our souls and become part of our faith language.

Many of the songs on this list had little to no concerns. For those that gave us pause, we attempted to provide specific points we hope you will consider. They generally follow several prominent themes we observed throughout the project.

- **Biblical and Theological Concerns.** What a blessing that creative writers prayerfully pour into new songs and new words for the church to sing. There were several instances where the writer took artistic liberties with the Biblical text and we had concerns about the accuracy of the hermeneutics. There were also instances where a text might be theologically sound in another tradition, but not in our Reformed tradition. When singing these songs, be thoughtful about how your "in between words" and other service elements either reinforce or correct these issues.
- **Individualistic vs. Corporate.** Many of the songs are highly individualistic, lacking language that reminds us of our worshiping in community. When our primary language week after week is individualistic, it gradually forms us to contain worship to MY service, MY relationship with God, MY, MY, MY. When we worship corporately we experience both the joy and the responsibility of living in community. We have the joy of participating in worship that resounds far beyond the walls of our building. We participate in the important work of covenant renewal with siblings in Christ. We also hold the precious responsibility of bearing with one another, caring for one another, and learning to love one another through our worship. When singing these songs, we encourage you to frame them in such a way that emphasizes the corporate nature of our worship.
- **Minimization of Human Reality and Suffering.** Of course, you are not going to fill your entire service with songs of lament or petition each week. We sing words of praise, thanksgiving, joy, and gratitude. We sing words of reassurance to each other and sometimes to ourselves about God's power and presence. We encourage you to be particularly mindful of those in your congregation who suffer - either publicly or silently. A continual barrage of "be happy - God's got this!" minimizes pain and presents a problematic long-term understanding of God's presence or absence in human suffering. Allow ample space for honest and truthful lament. When singing these songs, we encourage you to acknowledge that we don't always sing words because they are true to our current reality, but because they are our hope for the future.
- **Congregationally unsingable.** We recognize this is subjective because every congregation is different. But there are several songs where we highlight the difficulty for average church members to sing and learn a song well. Reformed worship places a high value on the participatory nature of corporate worship. We strongly encourage a song diet primarily filled with songs that can be SUNG by your congregation.

On a final note, there were many other criteria discussed that have not been included in this document. We did not account for the mega-church movements and their associated controversies (Hillsong and Bethel). We encourage you to be mindful and [make wise choices](#) for your particular context, but we did not include this as part of our vetting. We also noted certain instances of gendered language but did not eliminate songs based on that. We do wish to note that changing lyrics in any way is a violation of copyright and we do not encourage it.

Thank you for being the “someone” in your congregation who makes small decisions each week that have a large impact over time. We know these are difficult decisions, sometimes met with criticism and strong opinions. We see you and appreciate you. We are hopeful for you, and with you for vibrant, healthy worship practices in our Reformed churches. What a joy it is to partner in the gospel through song.

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Green (No or minor reservations)

A Thousand Hallelujahs
Agnus Dei
Amazing Grace/My Chains
Because He Lives
Before the Throne of God
Blessed Be Your Name
Build My Life
Christ Be Magnified
Christ Our Hope in Life and Death
Cornerstone
Do it Again
Everlasting God
Forever
Glorious Day (You Called My Name)
God So Loved
Good Good Father
Goodness of God
Great Are You Lord
Great Things
He Will Hold Me Fast
Here I am to Worship
His Mercy is More
Hosanna (I See the King of Glory)
How Deep the Father's Love
How Great Is Our God
How Great Thou Art
Hymn of Heaven
In Christ Alone
Is He Worthy
Jesus Messiah
King of Kings
Living Hope
Lord, I Need You

Mighty to Save
My Jesus
O Praise the Name
Only King Forever
Open the Eyes of My Heart
Our God
Praise is Rising
Promises
Revelation Song
Same God
Shout to the Lord
Ten Thousand Reasons
The Blessing
This I Believe (Creed)
This is Amazing Grace
Tremble
What a Beautiful Name
Who You Say I Am
Worthy of it All
Yet Not I But Through Christ
You are My King (Amazing Love)
Your Grace is Enough

Yellow (Some reservations)

All Hail King Jesus
At the Cross/Love Ran Red
Battle Belongs
Believe For It
Champion
Death Was Arrested
Evidence
Firm Foundation
Forever (We Sing Hallelujah)
Glorious Day
Gratitude
Graves into Gardens
Holy Spirit You are Welcome
Holy Water

House of the Lord
How He Loves
I Speak Jesus
I Thank God
Jesus Paid it All
Jireh
King of My Heart
Make Room
My Testimony
No Longer Slaves
Nothing Else
O Come to the Altar
Oceans
Open Up the Heavens
Raise a Hallelujah
Rattle
Reckless Love
Rest on Us
Run to the Father
See a Victory
Stand in Your Love
Thank You Jesus for the Blood
The Heart of Worship
The Lion and the Lamb
There's Nothing That Our God Cannot Do
Victory in Jesus
Way Maker
We Praise You
What He's Done
What I See
Yes I Will

Comments on Cautions for Yellow List

All Hail King Jesus - Some of the imagery is non-biblical and bizarre. It places us within the story, but in problematically intimate ways. Vocal range is particularly challenging. It's a difficult song to "road map" with multiple different verses and choruses that are melodically different.

At the Cross/Love Ran Red - Individualistic language and individualistic view of salvation. Almost no direct mention of God. "Washed white" can carry overtones heavy with racial insensitivity. Yes, there are ample Scriptural instances of sin being "washed white" but be mindful of the fact that this metaphor may be difficult for persons of color to sing.

Believe For It - Be sensitive to those for whom the "miracle" doesn't come. It is right to still believe and hold fast to the power of God, but be pastorally sensitive to those for whom the valleys persist. Verses difficult to sing well congregationally.

Death Was Arrested - "Death was arrested" is somewhat unclear (not a biblical metaphor). Much of the imagery in this song is non-biblical and secular. Intergenerationally inaccessible.

Firm Foundation - Text "he's never let me down" and promise of safety need proper context. (i.e. can martyrs sing this?). Leaves little room for lament and the role of faith and suffering. Some will struggle with singability if the congregation is unable to learn gospel syncopation.

Forever (We Sing Hallelujah) - Creative liberty was taken with creation imagery around the cross and tomb. Narrow lens of atonement. Congregationally difficult to sing with syncopation and a wide range.

Glorious Day (Living He Loved) - Verse 1 is theologically problematic on multiple counts. Heaven's praise did not cease with the fall. "Sin as black as can be" might be racially insensitive. Gendered language (should not be altered due to copyright law).

Gratitude - Lyrics are all about what I do; not much about what God does or what exactly we're grateful for.

Holy Spirit, You are Welcome - Confusion around "change the atmosphere". Overly experiential emphasis on the Holy Spirit. Very vague divine activity that can easily be interpreted to have good feelings.

House of the Lord - Be pastorally sensitive to those who come into worship in places of despair. We rightly include songs of praise and gratitude but this particular song leaves little room for

those who keenly feel the absence of joy. Some Trinitarian slippage confusing the work of Father/Son (hung up on that cross....rolling stones away). Bridge spiritualizes material realities with an over-realized eschatology.

I Thank God - Overrealized eschatology in verses. Some may struggle with "Hell lost another one." This may need explaining or redefining in the larger sense of Christus Victor, particularly in a Reformed setting. Can seem like the doctrine of election is being denied. Singability and accessibility concerns, esp. verses and bridge.

Jesus Paid it All - "Change leper's spots" is deeply rooted in Scripture but can be triggering in the disability/ability conversations. "Washed white" can be racially problematic. Wide vocal range with the bridge.

Jireh - Problematic view of sinfulness- "Nothing we can do to let God down". Mixed metaphors get confusing. Verses are really hard to sing congregationally.

King of My Heart - Bridge fails to acknowledge/prepare people for "dark night of the soul" moments. Lacks clear links with divine presence that is always with us--not always giving us our way (hint of prosperity gospel). The chorus is remarkably un-melodic making it congregationally difficult to sing.

My Testimony - Needs framing alongside broader corporate expression. Several Biblically confusing creation metaphors "signs and wonders/resurrection power", "satan falls like lightning".

No Longer Slaves - Problematic equation of OT stories with my personal life. Sense of covenantal community is missing. "Unravel with a melody" lacks clarity and connection with divine activity. "Slave" language, while Biblical can be pastorally insensitive not only racially, but culturally.

O Come to the Altar - Altar imagery is not particularly resonant or common in Reformed circles. Without a contextual understanding of an "altar call", where are we encouraging people to come? Is it a physical location? A spiritual one? To an unknown place where sins are forgiven? We encourage clarity with in between words. There is also concern that leaving behind sinfulness is something we can/cannot do in our own strength.

Oceans - Only mention of God is in bridge ("Spirit lead me"). Scriptural claims of "You are Mine" are God-active. This text reverses it with a focus on human agency and ownership "I am yours, and you are mine." Drowning language is pastorally challenging. The bridge is challenging to sing.

Reckless Love - Ambiguous meaning. Language is extremely individualistic. Melody can be challenging for congregations (esp. 8ve jump). There has been much controversy around the idea of God's love being "reckless." Be mindful that God and God's love is not portrayed as "reckless" meaning "out of control, wild, made in error, etc." "Reckless" in this context needs to illustrate the vastness of God's love and God's relentless pursuit to love his children.

Thank You Jesus for the Blood - Mixes atonement images: from penal substitution ("you took my place") to ransom ("we are ransomed by the Father" / "paid the debt I owe") to Christus victor ("broke my chains"). A wide range of images for Christ's saving work is important, but perhaps this song conflates them a little too close for comfort. Congregationally difficult to sing. Would be good for special music with a skilled soloist, but melodically complicated for corporate singing.

The Heart of Worship - Very personal language - not corporate. Language of "requirement" around worship indicates human responsibility in providing something for God

The Lion and the Lamb - Lyrics make God an actor in our story, rather than us a participant in God's story. Victor language is too triumphalistic

There's Nothing that Our God Cannot Do - Problematic theology of suffering (sing your way through the pain). Gaslights/undermines human experience. "touch" language can be triggering. The text suggests that there is nothing that God WON'T do (but that's not true)

Way Maker - Language is too individualistic. We need to make bold declarations together that acknowledge God's presence to God's covenant people not to me/you alone. Song lacks awareness of our sense of divine absence or pain in the world. Be wise and pastorally sensitive for those in your church who arrive unable to declare that "even when I don't see it, you're working." Be mindful to not minimize suffering.

What He's Done - Individualistic language. "Even death is dead and done" does not acknowledge the reality of earthly death. Congregationally unsingable.

Yes, I Will - Overemphasis on the individual - esp. individual's actions of praise rather than God's praiseworthiness. Some who are sensitive to growth of the prosperity gospel or in the midst of pain/tragedy may find lyrics provocative.

Songs Requiring Additional Caution (Yellow with Italics)

Battle Belongs - Incorporates a victory/deliverance theology that is triumphalistic in nature. It assures us that when God is on our side, we will always win. Yes, and....it greatly minimizes theodicy as something with a quick and easy fix. Problematic warfare language (potential leaning for Christian supremacists; praise as power/control of spiritual realm)

Champion - Extreme overemphasis of human action and human authority, particularly in the bridge. Minimizes the reality of human suffering and pain. Difficult to sing congregationally.

Evidence - Tag is problematic because it minimizes pain and suffering.

Language of "evidence" seems to coincide with "truth/proof/belief." It is entirely possible to see God's hand at work and still dwell in pain and suffering. Acknowledging suffering does not mean you have no faith.

Graves Into Gardens - Strong individualistic language. Individualistic soteriological view (individual rescuing). Overly self-confident language in the face of challenges with promise of getting the desired result. Gender-exclusive language (don't recommend altering text due to copyright law).

Holy Water - Problematic, non-reformed, born-again theology of baptism. "Holy water" does not represent a reformed understanding of baptismal water. Strongly disagree with "don't wanna abuse your grace" for theological reasons and also for abuse/trauma survivors' experience.

How He Loves - Much of the imagery in the verses is not Biblically based or theologically sound. Strong aversion to "heaven meets earth like a sloppy wet kiss". Overly intimate and individualistic language.

I Speak Jesus - Turns the name of Jesus into an incantation. Concerning association of depression with spiritual warfare. Places human responsibility on overcoming spiritual warfare.

Make Room - "Shake up the ground of all my tradition / Break down the walls of all my religion" NO! Reformed theology has respect for tradition and doctrine. Even if it is not equally authoritative to Scripture, we still think there is wisdom in theological structure, whatever that might look like.

Individualistic and focus on human activity and action. Not a single mention of God. "I will make room for you to do what you want to" is overtly sexual and can be traumatizing for victims of abuse.

Nothing Else - Limits God's presence to that moment and that particular place. Sings more like a love song than a song of worship with extremely intimate language. No mention of God.

Open Up the Heavens - No mention of God. Overrealized eschatology. Not Biblical language. Text encourages us to invoke God's presence among us rather than recognizing that it is God who welcomes us to worship. It's a problematic theology of worship to think we need to do something to make God show up and be present among us.

Raise a Hallelujah - Text across the board does not agree with our Reformed theology. Overemphasis on human agency and human responsibility. Language of warfare and weaponizing (not necessarily spiritual). This can imply that praise is the only acceptable response to God in times of trial (as opposed to other expressions, such as lament, confession, petition, etc.).

Rattle - Problematic to suggest that the resurrection was an event that happens again and again in our worship. The power and the benefits persist, but this text implies the repeatability of the resurrection in worship. Uncomfortable with predictions of God's action in the room in the moment. Congregationally difficult to sing.

Rest on Us - Overemphasis on experience, encounter, and emotional high. Concern with equating this with work of the Spirit. Lacks clarity on the role of the Spirit drawing from Scripture and theology...convictions, spiritual gifts for upbuilding, unity, transformation, reconciliation, global outpouring on all flesh regardless of age, gender, culture and ability.

Run to the Father - Strong focus on human agency and action "I run to the Father, I fall into grace, I'm done hiding." as though human agency can solve the problem of sin and suffering "I see it now, I'm laying it down." The language used about our bodies is not Biblical and is uncomfortable to sing. Not congregationally singable.

See a Victory - Framing the arrival of victory now or in the eschaton? Concern over highly militant language. Overconfidence in God on one's side and bad will turn to good. Problematic assumption that we can speak victory into existence.

Stand in Your Love - Not a single mention of God. Confusion around what it means to "stand in your love." Distorted view of shame and fear that not only minimizes the reality of fear, but places burden of responsibility on us to do something about it. Song is really more about God's power than God's love.

Victory in Jesus - There is nothing especially Christian about the text other than the mention of Jesus. Ableist language throughout. Highly individualistic language. Problematic triumphalistic promises.

We Praise You - Overrealized eschatology. Formationally leans toward moralistic therapeutic deism, emphasizing that our primary relationship with God centers around God's ability to make things right for each one of us individually. Utilizes warfare language that may be unhelpful in many contexts

What I See - Problematic to conflate born-again conversion with general resurrection at end of age. "something stirring six feet under" is overtly casual and potentially triggering language. Relies on driving percussion and robust band. Congregationally hard to sing.

SONG	R/Y/G	Strengths	Opportunities	Liturgical Use
Goodness of God		Congregationally singable and intergenerationally accessible Use of God-active language that points us to God's goodness and invites us to respond. Multi-faceted view of God's relationship with us: father, friend, faithful Sovereignty and Providence themes woven throughout	Very individualistic language. "Goodness" is understood primarily relationally (goodness toward me) instead of covenantally/communally Concern over connection to Bethel Music and a second verse with very immanentist language	Functions well as a testimony song. Could be used to proclaim God's action in our lives. Call to commitment/service Pair with Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 10 Consider the echoes in the text to Psalm 23
Build My Life		Strong references to God's worthiness and holiness. Distinct focus on agency of God ("show me/ fill me" lead me) Explicitly names Jesus Congregationally singable and intergenerationally accessible. Musically easy enough to be adaptable for various teams of musicians.	Individualistic language Concern that the bridge section emphasizes human action - am I building my life, or is it God at work through me? Generic praise - praise of God un-connected to specific acts in salvation history.	Response to assurance of pardon/forgiveness Opening of Worship/General Praise Consider pairing with Scripture and song that grounds our foundation in God, not self.
Living Hope		Broad views of atonement (e.g., evangelical view of "bridging chasm" or "taking place" as well as Christus Victor views of "breaking chains"). Overall good imagery with Biblical language. Tells the whole redemptive story. Depicts specific salvation acts with an emphasis on the centrality of Christ's work through the cross. Congregationally singable - easy to learn, hymnic quality	Concern over emphasis on human agency/capacity to reach God Misses the "what now" portion of the gospel. God has saved us, the end is written - but the redemptive restoration of all things and not just my soul is missing. What are we called to now that we have a living hope in Christ?	Assurance of Pardon Easter In response to a death in the congregation
House of the Lord		Communal language that invites joyful participation. God-active. Emphasis on God's saving acts and character and the connection between them. Good deliverance language that contrasts our sinfulness with salvation and life in Christ.	Be pastorally sensitive to those who come into worship in places of despair. We rightly include songs of praise and gratitude but this particular song leaves little room for those who keenly feel the absence of joy. Theological issues Some Trinitarian slippage confusing the work of Father/Son (hung up on that cross....rolling stones away). Bridge spiritualizes material realities with an over-realized eschatology	Opening of Worship/General Praise
Great Are You Lord		Good God-active, communal language Bridge has a cosmic scope and serves as a reminder that all creation joins in worship Holds the eschatological tension of already/not yet well. Good imagery of darkness/light, brokenness/restoration	Song has been used by White Christian Nationalist groups	General praise/opening of worship Echoes of multiple Psalms (suggested use: pair with reading of an entire psalm)
Graves Into Garden		Good language around God's power and sovereignty. Repeated reminders of God's work of restoration	Strong individualistic language. Individualistic soteriological view (individual rescuing). Overly self-confident language in the face of challenges with promise of getting the desired result. Gender-exclusive language	Assurance/Forgiveness Testimony A service where you want strong contrast language about sin/salvation, guilt/grace, etc
What a Beautiful Name		Jesus-centred language that captures more than just the cross ("Word at the beginning," "you brought heaven down"). Corporate/communal language that encourages us to think about the cosmic scope of redemption, rather than individualistic saving. Lots of good Scripture imagery encompassing the full scope of Christ throughout Scripture.	Strong individualistic language. Individualistic soteriological view (individual rescuing). Overly self-confident language in positive resolution to challenges Gender-exclusive language	Consider weaving this song in with various Scripture passages or prayers incorporating the names of Jesus Use in conjunction with the Lord's Prayer - "hallowed be thy name"
Way Maker		God-active language that includes many names/attributes for God that remind us of God's action and presence in the world. Intergenerationally accessible and generally congregationally singable.	Language is too individualistic. We need to make bold declarations together that acknowledge God's presence to God's covenant people not to me/you alone. Song lacks awareness of our sense of divine absence or pain in the world. Be wise and pastorally sensitive for those in your church who arrive unable to declare that "even when I don't see it, you're working." Be mindful to not minimize suffering.	Opening of worship moving people into a time of confession Use with liturgical framing that helps to avoid denial of already/not yet tensions ("Some come to worship awaiting miracles, some can testify...")
King of Kings		Corporate and communal. The text tells God's story, not our own participation in God's story. Strong Trinitarian language in the refrain. This is rare and beautiful! Creedal and confessional language that tells the whole story of redemptive history. Old Testament references, solid Christology and a verse that connects Christ's work to the Spirit shaping the church.	Missed opportunity to include a call to live and work toward restoration as the redeemed people of God.	Use as a creedal declaration of faith Opening or closing of worship Christ the King Sunday
Battle Belongs		The Reformed context does not have a lot of songs that speak to the reality of spiritual warfare and battles. It has been all but excised from our repertoire. This song is a good reminder of this gap in our song diets. Acknowledges very real fears. This song invites worshipers to name their fears and place them before God.	Incorporates a victory/deliverance theology that is triumphalistic in nature. It assures us that when God is on our side, we will always win. Yes, and....it greatly minimizes theodicy as something with a quick and easy fix. Problematic warfare language (potential leaning for christian supremacist; praise as power / control of spiritual realm)	Response to a sermon on spiritual warfare

SONG	R/Y/G	Strengths	Opportunities	Liturgical Use
10,000 Reasons		Congregationally very singable, intergenerationally accessible Borrows language from Psalm 103 Involves horizontal and vertical language- singing to God and to oneself	None	General song of praise Use in a service of remembrance - "forget not all God's benefits."
This is Amazing Grace		God-active language Includes many reasons for why we praise God (power in creation, redemption, justice and mercy.) Use of both individual and corporate language Good opportunity for call and response/question and answer, especially when teaching.	Congregationally difficult to sing - syncopation is difficult for congregation	Assurance or General praise Christ the King Sunday
Glorious Day (You called my name)		God-active language Solid atonement metaphors with good imagery Incorporates personal testimony	Individualistic language Congregationally difficult to sing. Congregationally boring to sing. "ran out of darkness" is eschatologically confusing	Assurance or General praise Sing as a song of praise in response to testimony
How Great is Our God		Lots of Biblical imagery, names the Trinity, super singable, well-known, song of praise	Syncopation can be difficult Range can be difficult, particularly in the bridge	Opening song of praise Use the bridge as a sung refrain during a prayer focusing on the names/attributes of God
Great Things		Good Christus Victor language Anti-deistic Corporate language that encourages communal praise	Difficult to sing (particularly in the chorus and bridge) Be mindful in the second verse that it can be difficult for people who are not experiencing "yes and amen". This is an opportunity to remind people that we don't always sing our reality. Sometimes we sing our hope.	Call to Worship/Opening song of praise Song of testimony or declaration of faith Pair with "Bless His Holy Name" - "He has done great things, he has done great things, he's so good to me."
Who You Say I Am		God-active language Identity shaping language Individualistic but in this instance, it is a personal declaration and reminder to each person of their identity as a child of God	Text difficult to sing, particularly in the verses Difficult without a robust rhythm section and solid praise team	Assurance of Pardon Use as a part of baptismal remembrance
In Christ Alone		Text tells the whole gospel story (Creedal) Congregationally singable (hymnic), Incorporates wide atonement theological lenses	Language in the 4th verse is not gender neutral. Suggested rewrite "No power of hell, no human plan can ever pluck me from his hand."	Use with Lord's Day 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism One of the greatest strengths of this song is its flexibility to sing anywhere in a service during any season!
Raise a Hallelujah		Extends an invitation to participate in congregational singing	Text across the board does not agree with our Reformed theology Over-emphasis on human agency and human responsibility Language of warfare and weaponizing (not necessarily spiritual) Can imply that praise is the only acceptable response to God in times of trial (as opposed to other expressions, such as lament, confession, petition, etc.)	
Lord I Need You		God-active language Emphasizes reliance and dependance on Jesus alone Congregationally singable and easy to learn	Language might be viewed as overly emotional Individualistic	Sung prayer of confession Make a medley with the traditional hymn "I Need Thee Every Hour" Use the refrain as part of prayers of the people, praying corporately for the needs of the world.
O Praise the Name (Anastasis)		Text tells the whole gospel story Good imagery that broadens imagination Good use of "place" in the text that draws you into it (puts you at the scene). Communal language	Range is difficult for congregational singing Eschatological concern : Rapture referenes in verse 4	General song of praise Eastertide
Amazing Grace/My Chains are Gone		New opportunity to sing a beloved and familiar hymn Can include original verses of "Amazing Grace". *Note this is a green light song assuming the fourth verse is changed*	Theological issues with final verse "The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, the sun forebear to shine." Replace with original verses.	Assurance and Guide to Grateful Living
How Great Thou Art		Evokes creation and salvation God active language		Season of Creation General song of praise Pair with a creation psalm
God So Loved		Invitational but God-active Scripture reference to John 3:16 Mix of individual/communal language	Doxological bridge has no mention of Spirit	Invitation to the Table Invitation to worship (with an exhortation to bring your whole self to God in worship)

SONG	R/Y/G	Strengths	Opportunities	Liturgical Use
Cornerstone		Good emphasis on trust in Christ alone Re-tuned hymn with added refrain. Bridges contemporary/traditional	None	General song of praise Song of dedication
I Speak Jesus		Reminders of God's presence in dark and difficult times	Turns the name of Jesus into an incantation Concerning association of depression with spiritual warfare Extreme Pentecostal theology Places human responsibility on overcoming spiritual warfare	None
The Lion and the Lamb		Demonstrates good balance between victorious lion and sacrificial lamb	Lyrics make God an actor in our story, rather than us a participant in God's story, Victor language too triumphalistic	Christ the King Philippians 2
How Deep the Father's Love		Individualistic but allows for personal confession of sin with the reassurance of forgiveness/life Meaningful poetic phrases that place the worshipper at the foot of the cross Outlines the implications of the atonement.	"The Father turns his face away" is a notoriously controversial line. There are valid theological arguments either way; it is worth considering whether this line would be problematic for your context, and consider changing if deemed necessary. Non-gender inclusive language "many sons". For copyright reasons, words should not be changed from context to context.	Confession/Assurance Holy Week
O Come to the Altar		Sacrificial atonement imagery Bridge has standalone potential as a sung refrain	Altar imagery is not particularly resonant or common in Reformed circles. Without a contextual understanding of an "altar call", where are we encouraging people to come? Is it a physical location? A spiritual one? To an unknown place where sins are forgiven? There is also concern that leaving behind sinfulness is something we can/cannot do in our own strength.	Dedication
Revelation Song		Text is full of Biblical imagery Mix of corporate and individual language all pointing us to worship and adoration Good acknowledgement of creation's participation in praise	Syncopation is difficult congregationally	General song of praise
Good Good Father		Simple in language and direct conversation with God Embodies people's heartfelt relationship with God	Be mindful of those who have a difficult history with their earthly fathers. While this song is a good reminder of the love and care of our heavenly father, it can be triggering and sensitive for those with painful relationships.	General song of praise Assurance
Holy Spirit You are Welcome Here		Names the Spirit and the activity of the Spirit	Confusion around "change the atmosphere" Overly experiential emphasis on Holy Spirit Very vague divine activity that can easily be interpreted to have good feelings	Pair with other liturgical elements about the Holy Spirit, esp. Chorus If used, frame with Pentecost Sermon, call to worship, or readings that clearly talk about what we are asking for
King of My Heart		Declaration of God's goodness that declares trust	Chorus is remarkably un-melodic making it congregationally difficult to sing Bridge fails to acknowledge/prepare people for "dark night of the soul" moments Lacks clear links with divine presence that is always with us--not always giving us our way (hint of prosperity gospel)	Frame carefully with biblical, collective promises of assurance
Reckless Love		Pairs well with Psalm 23 and parable of lost sheep Solid engagement with parables in Luke 15 Strong sense of divine activity rooted in self-giving love.	Ambiguous meaning Language is extremely individualistic Melody can be challenging for congregations (esp. 8ve jump) There has been much controversy around the idea of God's love being "reckless." Be mindful that God and God's love is not portrayed as "reckless" meaning "out of control, wild, made in error, etc." "Reckless" in this context needs to illustrate the vastness of God's love and God's relentless pursuit to love his children.	Use with above mentioned texts or any scripture teaching on God's hesed
Firm Foundation		In the proper context it can build faith Pair with classic hymns like "How Firm a Foundation" or "Solid Rock" Strong links with other historic songs around God's faithfulness and drawing in gospel styles.	Text "he's never let me down" and promise of safety need context. (i.e. can martyrs sing this?). Leaves little room for lament and the role of faith and suffering. Some struggle with singability if congregation is unable to learn gospel syncopation.	Song of assurance
The Blessing		Musically adaptable to various teams and various skill levels Strong links with priestly blessing Strong ties to God's global faithfulness during COVID.	Bridge isn't very congregational/singable Can be overused in some contexts?	Sending song Blessing
Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me		Ties strongly with pietistic and christological sensibilities in the Reformed tradition. Musically adaptable to various teams Strong statement of faith with emotional range	Emphasis is on individual - lacks a larger sense of Christian community.	Assurance Dedication Sending

SONG	R/Y/G	Strengths	Opportunities	Liturgical Use
Blessed Be Your Name		Musically adaptable to various teams Text contains emotional range & honesty (themes of both blessing and suffering) Links to biblical lament	High syncopation and varied tempos raises singability concerns	Gathering or Sending - especially where a mix of grief and praise is needed
We Praise You		Recognizes anxiety, darkness, walls, which show a pastoral awareness of needs of the congregation	Overrealized eschatology Formationally leans toward moralistic therapeutic deism, emphasizing that our primary relationship with God centers around God's ability to make things right for each one of us individually. Utilizes warfare language that may be unhelpful in many contexts Utilizes warfare language that may be unhelpful in many contexts	
Yes I Will		Singable and musically adaptable to various teams Text allows for a wide emotional range	Overemphasis on individual - esp. individual's actions of praise rather than God's praiseworthiness Some who are sensitive to growth of the prosperity gospel or in the midst of pain/tragedy may find lyrics provocative.	Dedication Praise in difficult times
I Thank God		Strong use of testimony Uptempo groove that encourages embodied worship.	Singability and accessibility concerns, esp. verses and bridge Overrealized eschatology in verses Some many struggle with "Hell lost another one." This may need explaining or redefining in the larger sense of Christus Victor particularly in Reformed setting. Can seem like the doctrine of election is being denied.	High praise Celebration in Eastertide
His Mercy is More		Strong affirmation of God's mercy Congregationally singable	Mixed meter can be challenging for some players	Assurance
Here I am to Worship		Easily accessible and singable Intergenerational - particularly for kids Strong sense of divine activity.	Overly individual emphasis - focus of the activity is on individual me. Does well in evangelically-oriented reformed congregations.	Gathering (omit bridge) Assurance Advent/Christmas/Epiphany
Gratitude		Emotionally evocative expression of thanks and praise Links to a number of Psalm to command our souls to worship.	Lyrics are all about what I do; not much about what God does or what exactly we're grateful for	Response song to clear declarations of what God has done
Same God		Draws on OT characters to solidify God's past relational activity. Draws in male and female "heroes."	Challenging vocal range, especially with 8ve jumps in bridge; Not accessible to various ensemble. Solid musical difficulties to have the "vibe" of the recording with smaller ensembles. Overly individual emphasis. Taking God's big story and appropriating it.	Response/dedication after sermon about one of the above Alongside intercessory prayer
Because He Lives (Gaither)		Singable and well-known Makes an important connection between Christ's resurrection and the reception of new life into our world today (e.g., Christ's resurrection still matters today)	Questionable second stanza (How sweet to hold a newborn baby) because it so personally connected to the Gaithers own life experience. Says little God and God's work. The power of testimony is strong but it might be worth skipping this stanza. "All fear is gone" and other language in the refrain minimize human suffering and human experience. Be sensitive to those in your congregation with real fear and depression	Funeral
Rest on Us		Verses allude to Spirit's role in creation Strong Pentecost themes of "divine rest"	Overemphasis on experience, encounter, emotional high. Concern with equating this with work of the Spirit Lacks clarity on the role of the Spirit drawing from Scripture and theology... convictions, spiritual gifts for upbuilding, unity, transformation, reconciliation, global outpouring on all flesh regardless of age, gender, culture and ability.	Sing without chorus
Jesus Paid it All		Rooted in tradition; lends historical connection to worship Strong reworking of revivalist hymn Easily accessible to various instrumentation	Wide vocal range with bridge "Change leper's spots" is deeply rooted in Scripture but can be triggering in the disability/ability conversations "Washed white" can be racially problematic	Assurance
No Longer Slaves		Affirmation of identity and belonging links with Psalms and Exodus Might be particularly meaningful at adult baptisms.	Problematic equation of OT stories with my personal life Sense of covenantal community is missing "Unravel with a melody" lacks clarity and connection with divine activity. "Slave" language, while Biblical can be pastorally insensitive not only racially, but culturally.	Pair with Exodus / Passover story to provide covenantal context
Death Was Arrested		Singable; emotive and celebrative Strong sense of Christ's activity in the individual believer. Verse 4 and bridge bring that story into the larger community.	"Death was arrested" is somewhat unclear (not a biblical metaphor). Much of the imagery in this song is non-biblical and secular Intergenerationally inaccessible	Assurance Eastertide

SONG	R/Y/G	Strengths	Opportunities	Liturgical Use
Christ Be Magnified		Song of adoration that links to Christ, creation, nations and our individual response. High Christology; "I won't be formed by feelings" and suffering with Christ - helpful counter to much of Top 100	Potential over-glorification of suffering and death in the name of Christ	Gathering, Praise Eastertide Witness of creation
My Testimony		Strong trinitarian language in vs 3 Puts the personal testimony element/individual language out front (rather than collapsing broader elements into a personal narrative)	Needs framing alongside broader corporate expression Question of trigger words "signs and wonders / resurrection power", "satan falls like lightning"	Response to confession/assurance Opening praise (high energy, declarative)
Praise is Rising (Hosanna)		Corporate language Redemptive/restoration arc Praise heavy	Synocopation is difficult to sing Steep vocal jump from verses to chorus - verses are lower range; chorus is higher range "in your presence all fears are washed away" - minimizes real fear Be mindful that "come have your way" language can be triggering for abuse/trauma survivors	Palm Sunday ("hosanna" in chorus) Good building / opener
Promises		Strong covenantal language vs 1 Acknowledges God's promises and encourages us to make promises in response	Challenging to sing (syncopation; lots of diff musical material)	Declaration of God's faithfulness Around the theme of covenant
Do It Again		Vs 1 acknowledging things aren't yet what we hope/are promised to be Strong emphasis on faithfulness	Potential over-confidence that things will be better Missed opportunity to name restoration of all things in addition to personal	Adaptable for confession/assurance/ statement of faith
Jesus Messiah		Scriptural language/paraphrase Adaptable for various instrumentation/leadership	Synocopation in verses "His body the bread, his blood the wine" might be confusing for those unfamiliar with the Eucharistic imagery	Communion song
Mighty to Save		Solidly salvation oriented Great one-liners	Highly individualistic	Confession/Assurance Easter Epiphany
See a Victory		Reminder of the reality of spiritual warfare Theme of victory in Christ	Framing the arrival of victory now or in the eschaton? Question of militant language Over confidence in God on one's side and bad will turn to good Speaking victory into existence	
Thank You Jesus for the Blood		Strong emphasis on total depravity and the sinful nature of humanity. Powerful song of testimony It recalls the first-person testimony of the Gospel Hymn tradition	Mixes atonement images: from penal substitution ("you took my place") to ransom ("we are ransomed by the Father" / "paid the debt I owe") to Christus victor ("broke my chains"). A wide range of images for Christ's saving work is important, but perhaps this song conflates them a little too close for comfort. Congregationally difficult to sing. Would be good for special music with a skilled soloist, but melodically complicated for corporate singing.	Confession/Assurance Pair with something familiar like "Nothing But the Blood of Jesus"
Open the Eyes of My Heart		Simple and familiar Adaptable to various instrumentation/leadership		General song of praise Prayer for illumination
Worthy of it All		Scriptural imagery from Revelation and Romans Direct song of praise and adoration that can be sung personally or corporately	Very few churches in our tradition use incense. Makes this a confusing metaphor Post-refrain "ooohh" section is repetitive and pointless	General song of praise Prayer for illumination
Victory in Jesus		Includes surrender language	Nothing especially Christian about the text Ableist language throughout Highly individualistic language Problematic triumphalistic promises	
Shout to the Lord		Familiar and well-loved (at least used to be) Recognition that creation and humanity alike join their voice in praise		General song of praise In conjunction with a creation Psalm
Run to the Father		Acknowledges Christ's preeminence	Strong focus on human agency and action "I run to the Father, I fall into grace, I'm done hiding." Human agency can solve the problem of sin and suffering "I see it now, I'm laying it down" Language used in reference to our bodies is not Biblical and is uncomfortable to sing Not congregationally singable	

SONG	R/Y/G	Strengths	Opportunities	Liturgical Use
Our God		God active and corporate language Biblical imagery and references	Be cautious with power dynamics in the bridge with an adapted version of Romans 8. "If God is for us, who can be against us" is very different than "If God is for us, then who can ever stop us". Be cautious with triumphalistic language	General song of praise Conclusion of an Ash Wednesday service
All Hail King Jesus		Chorus 1 and Bridge would be good standalone options for praise Potential contemporary song for Palm Sunday	Imagery is non-Biblical and bizarre Places us within the story, but in problematically intimate ways Vocal range is particularly challenging Difficult song to "road map" with multiple different verses and choruses that are melodically different	Palm Sunday General song of praise
Hymn of Heaven		Style and text make space and give voice to those who are grieving and suffering Functions similar to a lament with an acknowledgment of what is with a declaration of hope	"In the end we will see it was worth it" potentially minimizes and gaslights human experience	All Saints Day Funeral Prayer and declaration of hope during difficult times
Make Room			"Shake up the ground of all my tradition / Break down the walls of all my religion" NO! Reformed theology has respect for tradition and doctrine. Even if it is not equally authoritative to Scripture, we still think there is wisdom in theological structure, whatever that might look like. Individualistic and focus on human activity and action Not a single mention of God "I will make room for you to do what you want to" is overtly sexual and can be traumatizing for victims of abuse	
Is He Worthy		Question and answer format makes verses easy and accessible for all ages Acknowledgment of suffering and pain in both humanity and creation Trinitarian Revelation 5	Chorus is difficult to sing Difficult to do with a solo instrument leading - requires robust instrumentation	General song of praise Advent Easter
Open Up the Heavens		A clear focus on God as the purpose for gathering to worship - not always the case with some CCM opening songs!	No mention of God Overrealized eschatology Not Biblical language Text encourages us to invoke God's presence among us rather than recognizing that it is God who welcomes us to worship. It's a problematic theology of worship to think we need to do something to make God show up and be present among us.	
Nothing Else		Song of confession that acknowledges the state of our hearts in worship	Limits God's presence to that moment and that particular place Sings more like a love song than a song of worship with extremely intimate language No mention of God	
Your Grace is Enough		Strong Biblical language Song that encourages the faith practice of remembrance Good balance in personal/corporate	Challenging vocal range Syncopated rhythm Theological concern with potential misuse of "heaven reaches down to us".	Assurance of Pardon Covenantal Remembrance/Baptism
What I See		Strong references to key eschatological dogma (general resurrection); Union with Christ/Reformed language - "he is risen / we are risen with him"	Problematic to conflate born-again conversion with general resurrection at end of age "something stirring six feet under" is overtly casual and potentially triggering language Relies on driving percussion and robust band. Congregationally hard to sing	Potential easter song for contemporary-leaning congregations
You are My King/Amazing Love		Does a good job of holding in juxtaposition sin and salvation, Solid contemporary option for King/Lordship Abbreviated soteriology in a box (complete package)	"Your Spirit is within me / because you died and rose again" is theologically confusing Congregationally difficult to sing	Guide to grateful living Confession/assurance
Tremble		Song helps us confront reality in world Intergenerationally friendly Fitting song for life/ministry of Jesus	Range is unrealistic for congregational singing.	Consider using refrain as stand alone Life and Ministry of Jesus song
There's Nothing That Our God Can't Do		Provides important reminders of God's sovereignty and control Rhythmically consistent with catchy tune Intergenerationally friendly	Problematic theology of suffering (sing your way through the pain) Gaslights/undermines human experience "touch" language can be triggering Text suggests that there is nothing that God WON'T do (but that's not true)	Be abundantly cautious of where and when to use this song, acknowledging the reality of human suffering and pain.
This I Believe (The Creed)		One of the few contemporary songs based on creedal texts Trinitarian	Congregationally tricky to sing - bridge has large melodic leaps	Sung Creed

SONG	R/Y/G	Strengths	Opportunities	Liturgical Use
Christ Our Hope in Life and Death		Good resonance to Heidelberg Catechism QA #1 Responsive question-and-answer mirrors Heidelberg Creedal Declaration of trust in God's action and faithfulness	Rhythmically can get a bit challenging in the chorus (2/4 + 3/4 mixed meters)	Sung Creed Confession/assurance
Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)		Well-known and has proven deep resonance with those experiencing difficult times	Drowning language is pastorally challenging Bridge is challenging to sing Only mention of God is in bridge ("Spirit lead me") Scriptural claims of "You are Mine" are God active. This text reverses it with a focus on human agency and ownership "I am yours, and you are mine."	Baptismal remembrance/renewal Consider using bridge of Build My Life instead of written bridge
Jireh		Bridge is a good declaration of identity Some biblical imagery	Problematic view of sinfulness- "nothing we can do to let God down" Mixed metaphors gets confusing Verses are really hard to sing congregationally	Testimony
The Heart of Worship		Does good work of personal confession Encourages self-examination Encourages an understanding of worship that goes deeper than singing/song	Very personal language - not corporate Language of "requirement" around worship indicates human responsibility in providing something for God	Confession
Stand in Your Love		Chorus is easy to sing	Not a single mention of God. Confusion around what it means to "stand in your love." Distorted view of shame and fear that not only minimizes the reality of fear, but places burden of responsibility on us to do something about it. Song is really more about God's power than God's love.	
Forever		Biblical imagery and good use of Psalm Responsive (call and response) Declaration of God's faithfulness and abiding presence Corporate	Syncopation is difficult to sing	Call to worship
Everlasting God		Biblical imagery (Ps 27; Isaiah) Good emphasis on waiting on God Corporate declaration of God's attributes	Confusion around what it means that "strength will rise" as we wait upon the Lord	Sung prayer Encouragement during difficult times
Holy Water			Problematic, non-reformed, born-again theology of baptism "Holy water" does not represent a reformed understanding of baptismal water Strongly disagree with "don't wanna abuse your grace" for theological reasons and also for abuse/trauma survivors experience	
Hosanna (I see the King of Glory)		Contemporary hosanna song Anticipates the second coming, placing us in that moment, just as we might place ourselves at the foot of the cross (e.g. "When I survey the wondrous cross.") This future reality has implications for today, we want to see an "in-breaking" of the kingdom come.	Bridge is difficult to sing and has problematic text (particularly the last line) which shifts away from "anticipatory" into over-realized eschatological reality. Dislike the use of "eternity" in this context. We don't walk towards a timeless reality, we walk towards everlasting life.	Consider singing without the bridge Contemporary song for Palm Sunday Refrain could be woven into a prayer or Psalm of praise (Ps. 118)
At the Cross/Love Ran Red		Song of surrender to God on the basis of God's character and trustworthiness	Almost no direct mention of God "Washed white" can carry overtones heavy with racial insensitivity. Yes, there are ample Scriptural instances of sin being "washed white" but be mindful of the fact that this metaphor may be difficult for persons of color to sing. Individualistic language and individualistic view of salvation	Call to discipleship during Lent (needs God language)
What He's Done		Verse 3 mentions Christ's session (rare)	Congregationally unsingable Individualistic language "Even death is dead and done" does not acknowledge the reality of earthly death	Use as program song (offertory, etc.)
A Thousand Hallelujahs		Corporate language and invitation to praise Acknowledgment that we do not worship alone but participate as part of a community of faith in heaven and earth	Sets us a false dichotomy between creation's praise and humanity's praise	Use bridge as a standalone refrain General praise
Before the Throne of God Above		Good emphasis on Christ's session (high priest) Solid Reformed theology and Christology throughout	Wide vocal range	Christ the King Sunday or any service with a Christological focus Colossians 1

SONG	R/Y/G	Strengths	Opportunities	Liturgical Use
Glorious Day (Living He Loved Me)	Yellow	Tells the whole story of life, death, resurrection, ascension	Verse 1 is theologically problematic on multiple counts. Heaven's praise did not cease with the fall. "Sin as black as can be" is racially insensitive. Gendered language.	Assurance Declaration of Faith
Agnus Dei	Green	Good Biblical imagery drawing from both Old and New Testament Not individualistic - corporate words of praise Congregationally singable Old enough to be familiar to most	Syncopation slightly difficult to navigate	Opening of Worship Liturgical flexibility to use in all seasons Consider highlighting the meaning of "Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)" by incorporating as part of confession/assurance.
How He Loves Us	Orange	Corporate reminders of God's love for us	Much of the imagery in the verses is not Biblically based or theologically sound Strong aversion to "heaven meets earth like a sloppy wet kiss" Overly intimate and individualistic language	Use refrain only and pair with another song about the love of God Weave refrain into a prayer that reminds people of God's love in all seasons of life
Rattle	Orange	Good reminder of God's miraculous power and work on earth, not only then, but also here and now	Congregationally difficult to sing Problematic to suggest that the resurrection was an event that happens again and again in our worship. The power and the benefits persist, but this text implies the repeatability of the resurrection in worship. Uncomfortable with predictions of God's action in the room in the moment	Easter In conjunction with Ezekiel
Only King Forever	Green	Corporate language of praise Declaration of trust and confidence in God's character and God's action	Highly syncopated and difficult to sing congregationally	Use with Philippians 2 General song of praise
Champion	Orange	Reminder of our identity in Christ	Extreme overemphasis of human action and human authority particularly in the bridge Difficult to sing congregationally Minimizes the reality of human suffering and pain	
My Jesus	Green	Song of testimony that invites us to recognize and give thanks for God's work in our lives God active proclamation of what God can do and desires to do for us	Language is very casual and might not sing well congregationally	Use as a testimony or in response to a testimony Use as special music for assurance of pardon/guide to gratitude
Believe for It	Yellow	Reminder of God's activity, God's power and majesty Acknowledgment of trials and suffering while declaring belief in God's action Corporate language throughout is a reminder that when your belief falters, you are surrounded by a community that believes with and for you.	Verses difficult to sing well congregationally Be sensitive to those for whom the "miracle" doesn't come. It is right to still believe and hold fast to the power of God, but be pastorally sensitive to those for whom the valleys persist.	Declaration of trust In response to a prayer of lament Prayer over someone who is struggling
He Will Hold Me Fast	Green	There is strength in the individualism of this song! It is a song one can sing to themselves, to others and to God as a reminder of God's presence and work in the lives of those God loves. Reminder of God's action, God's saving work, God's faithfulness	Rhythmically tricky with a change from 3/2 to 2/2 meter	This is a beautiful song for a funeral Assurance of Pardon/ Prayer for difficult times Heidelberg Catechism QA #1
Forever (We Sing Hallelujah)	Yellow	Corporate language Tells the story of death and resurrection, encouraging our hallelujahs	Creative liberty taken with creation imagery around the cross and tomb Narrow lens of atonement Congregationally difficult to sing with syncopation and wide range	Easter
Evidence	Orange	Testimony song that speaks of God's work in our lives God-active declaring God's ongoing action in the world Easy to sing and catch refrain	Tag is problematic because it minimizes pain and suffering. Language of "evidence" seems to coincide with "truth/proof/belief." It is entirely possible to see God's hand at work and still dwell in pain and suffering. Acknowledging suffering does not mean you have no faith	Testimony Use with Scripture/confession about providence