A personal reflection. Sunday worship from Jamaica Pentecostal to United Reformed Church UK.

Growing up in Jamaica after my parents returned home in 1969, worship was not simply something that happened on a Sunday morning—it shaped the whole day. My parents had spent fifteen years in Britain as part of the Windrush generation before returning to their Pentecostal roots in Jamaica. I was just seven years old, but those Sunday mornings remain some of my most vivid childhood memories.

The day began long before we arrived at church. I would wake to the familiar sounds of gospel music filling our home. Songs such as *We Thank Thee* by Jim Reeves and *Shady Green Pastures* by the Grace Thrillers prepared our hearts for worship and reminded us that Sunday belonged to the Lord.

Church life followed a well-loved pattern. Before the main service at 10.30 a.m., there was always an adult Sunday School lasting around thirty minutes. Even today, I still smile at the memory, wondering why it took place before the main service, but it was an important part of learning and fellowship for the adults.

The service itself would begin with a joyful medley of choruses led by church elders or by different groups depending on the occasion—Women's Sunday, Men's Sunday, or Young People's Sunday. A moderator or service leader would then be introduced to guide the congregation through the morning's worship.

Participation was central to Pentecostal worship. Members of the congregation would be invited, often without prior notice, to lead the opening prayer. Another person would pray for the children before we left for Sunday School. Testimonies were encouraged, giving people the opportunity to share how God had been at work in their lives. Scripture readings were always taken from the King James Version of the Bible, and everyone stood reverently once the passage had been announced.

There was also a deep sense of respect for the preached Word. If anyone needed to leave during the sermon, they would quietly rise, raise a hand slightly with one finger extended as a courteous signal, and leave as discreetly as possible so as not to disturb the service. When it was time for the offertory, children and adults would walk up to the front and place their offering with a lively chorus and tambourines and dancing as cheerful givers.

Just before the closing hymn, the children would return from Sunday School and be asked to recite the Golden Text—the key Bible verse they had learned that morning. The service would then conclude with a heartfelt altar call. Members were invited to renew their commitment to Christ, those seeking a fresh start could rededicate their lives, and visitors were warmly invited to come forward for prayer and to begin their own journey of faith.

Thirty years later: worshiping in the United Reformed Church has introduced me to a different but equally meaningful tradition. Services are generally more structured and follow a printed order of worship. Congregational participation remains important, but it is usually planned in advance rather than spontaneous. The atmosphere is often quieter and more reflective, with the sacraments, prayers, Scripture and preaching carefully woven together. Although altar calls and public testimonies are less common in some URC churches, the emphasis on God's grace, the proclamation of the Gospel and the fellowship of believers remains at the heart of worship.

Looking back, I treasure both traditions. The vibrant, participatory worship of my Jamaican Pentecostal upbringing nurtured a deep love for praising God, while the thoughtful and liturgical richness of the United Reformed Church has deepened my appreciation of worship in different forms. Though the styles differ, both remind me that true worship is ultimately about drawing closer to God and encouraging one another in faith. **Claudette Reid-Titre.**

Questions:

- What are some of the differences in this reflection between Church experience in Jamaica and England?
- Think about a childhood memory you have. What specific sounds, smells, or routines make the memory stick in your mind so clearly?
- Look at the final paragraph. The author values two completely opposite styles of worship. What does this teach us about how we should look at cultures or traditions that are different from our own?

Task: My Soundtrack



The author knew Sunday had arrived because Jim Reeves and the Grace Thrillers were playing in her home. Create a ‘soundtrack’ of 2-5 songs that represent a specific day or a routine in your life (e.g., a pre-church Sunday morning, a stressful Monday morning, a holiday)

Additional Questions:

- The author’s parents moved from the UK back to Jamaica to reconnect with their roots. Why do you think people feel a strong need to stay connected to their family’s original culture or traditions?
- The author’s parents spent 15 years in the UK as part of the Windrush Generation, before returning to Jamaica. How do you think moving between two different countries affects a person’s sense of “home”?