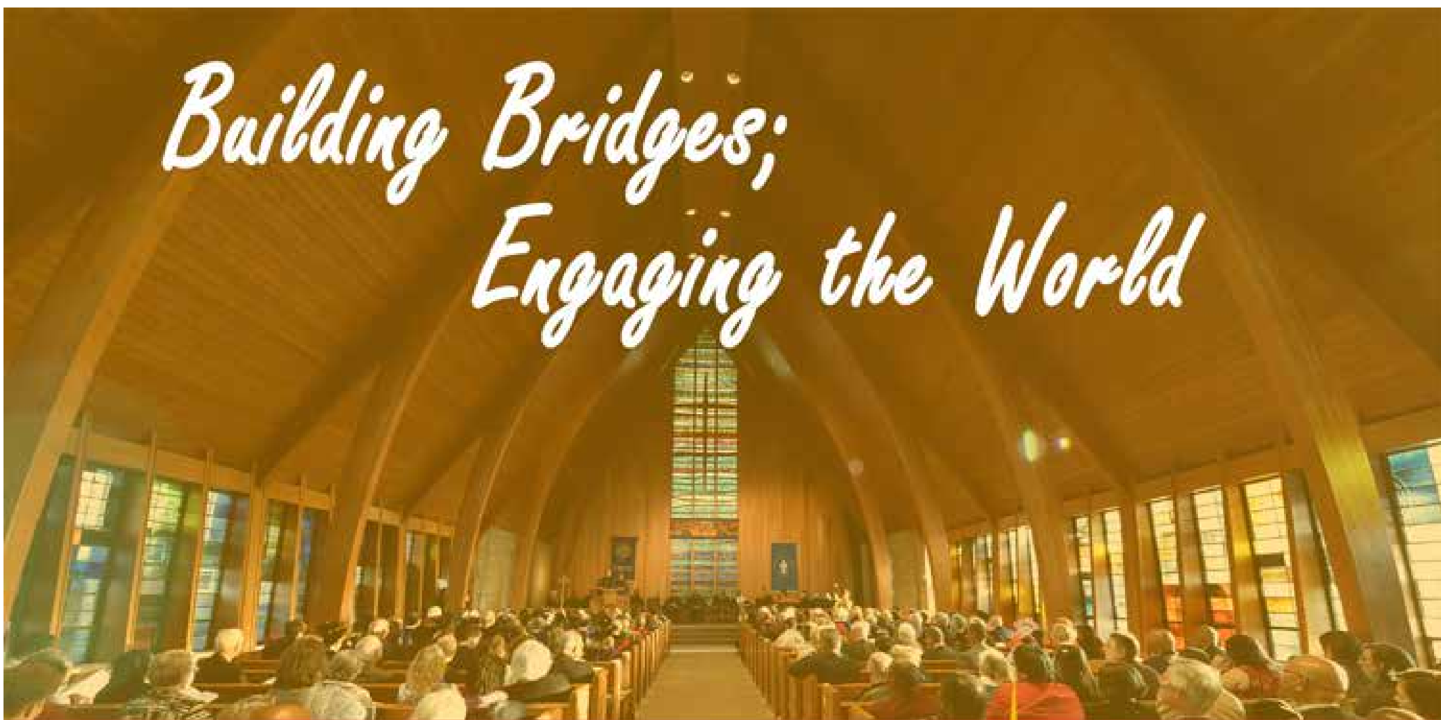
Liturgy, Music, Preaching, and the Arts

New Topics in Music

Volume 55.3



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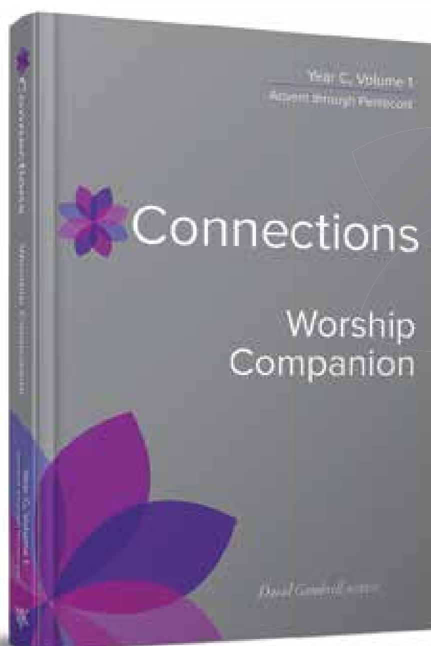

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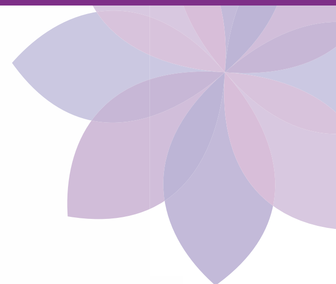

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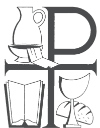
Call to Worship

Liturgy, Music, Preaching, and the Arts

Continuing the tradition of ***Reformed Liturgy & Music***

Volume 55.3

New Topics in Music



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Call to Worship

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Introduction

Kimberly Bracken Long

As I write these words, churches are beginning to gather in person once again. Our masks are still in place, and we may not all be singing yet; we are wondering what the winter months will bring. And yet, we continue to live and worship in hope.

This issue of *Call to Worship*, devoted to new topics in music, is an expression of that hope. Whether we are worshiping in person, virtually, or in some hybrid form, God still longs to hear our praise and prayer, and our hearts still yearn for divine encounter. May these words and images help us to worship in ways that honor the church's past while leaning into our God-given, waiting-to-be-blessed future.

Several articles focus on singing. Paul Vasile encourages us to free ourselves from so much paper and shows us how singing in simpler forms can lead to deeper engagement. David Music lifts up how congregational song forms us, while T. J. Shirley points to pitfalls and possibilities of songs in the contemporary worship music tradition.

Three organists share their insights in this issue. Charles Frost introduces us to organ repertoire by African American composers. Nicole Keller offers wisdom to pianists who suddenly find themselves on an organ bench, and William McNair explores the practice of improvisation by describing a pattern of preparation.

Jazz bassist Ike Sturm teams up with pastor Debbie Bronkema to describe new worship practices they are trying out—both virtually and in person—with a particular focus on how music can provide a liturgical soundscape to worship. Be sure to check out the websites they mention!

Three new hymnals have been published in the last year or two, and this issue includes thoughtful reviews of each of them. Musician and scholar Chris Ángel shares his insights of *Santo, Santo, Santo / Holy, Holy, Holy*, a Spanish-English hymnal arising from a partnership between GIA Publications and the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship. Pastor and musician Thomas Baynham reflects on *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism: An African American Ecumenical Hymnal*, published by GIA Publications. Notably, both hymnals are intended to be used across denominational lines. Musician, scholar, and hymnwriter David Bjorlin leads us through an exploration of the new Mennonite hymnal, *Voices Together*, which draws on a wide range of musical styles and traditions. This volume also points to the ecumenical nature of hymn collections of our time, even while staying rooted in the Mennonite tradition.

This issue's The Work of Our Hands section features the installation created by Lauren Wright-Pittman for the 2021 PAM Worship and Music Conference at Montreat. We are grateful to Lisle Gwynn Garrity for providing the photographs and to Lauren for describing the insights behind her work. Kelly Rider's linoleum cut prints grace these pages as well; her images speak with compelling exuberance.

Once again, our columnists Erika Rembert Smith, Stephen Fearing, Marlon Hurst, and Amy Gray offer reflections on the topic at hand that will engage heart, mind, and spirit. Finally, Margaret LaMotte Torrence and David Batchelder generously share ideas from their own ministries that will surely inspire yours.

I hope that as you read this issue you will know of the church's deep gratitude for the work you do as musicians, pastors, artists, and worship planning teams. We are living in difficult times, and what you do matters more than you may know. I pray, too, that these articles and images will strengthen and encourage you as you seek to serve our Lord Jesus Christ with energy, intelligence, imagination, and love.

Kimberly Bracken Long, Editor

Kelly Rider

Feature Articles

How Much Paper Does a Congregation Need?

Paul Vasile

Several years ago, I served as a guest musician at Broadway Presbyterian Church in New York City, helping the Rev. Chris Shelton begin a sermon series exploring the context and themes of the New Testament.

At the outset, he asked the congregation to imagine what worship was like in a time before bulletins, before hymnals, or even before the Gospels or Epistles were organized into the biblical canon. Then we invited them to a worship service that was paperless, participatory, and poetic. We used storytelling, prayer, and communal song to anchor the liturgy, as we might imagine the earliest followers of Jesus did. At the heart of this experiment was a playful invitation to see what we might learn or discover in the process.

Was it challenging and uncomfortable at times? No question.

Did it require leaders and worshipers to lean into a heightened level of listening and focus? Absolutely.

Yet, what I noticed as I scanned the room that morning were the faces and eyes of congregants connecting with each other. I saw feet tapping, hands clapping, and gentle swaying. I heard the voices of adults and toddlers alike. I watched as this intergenerational community slowly gained confidence and began to anticipate moments in which they would be invited to participate.

Without paper we were still able to sing beautifully together. Through lining out, call-and-response patterns, and lots of repetition, we experienced a classic hymn, short worship songs, as well as music from the global church and African American musical traditions. We also celebrated Eucharist, using call-and-echo responses to invite the community into an experience of sung and spoken prayer.

While Broadway Presbyterian Church is a community accustomed to liturgical exploration and play, I've had similar experiences with congregations of varied sizes and traditions around North America in my work as a consultant and as a facilitator with Music that Makes Community. Though the amount of "paperless" or oral tradition music I share is usually smaller (rarely a whole worship service), it is always a joy to see how quickly and intuitively communities sing without bulletins, screens, or hymnals.

To be clear, the question that frames this article—"How much paper does a congregation need?"—isn't rooted in rejection of notated music, disillusionment with technology, or a simplistic approach to musical style and performance practice. I am a classically trained musician grateful for the formative role hymnals and choral music play in many of our faith communities. In my experience, singing without paper doesn't minimize the importance of reading music, nor should it devalue the instruments or ensembles that enliven and enrich our singing together from the printed page or screens.

But in the past decade of exploration and experimentation, I have experienced how oral tradition learning has helped renew and strengthen singing in dozens of congregations I've worked with. It brings us back to something so basic and yet so profoundly human, the ancient practice of transmitting song from ear to ear that is present across cultures and religious traditions.

At its best, paperless singing offers a generous invitation into liturgy—the work of the people—welcoming everyone present, regardless of their age, experience, or skill, to collaborate in making music together. The late Scott Weidler, former program director for worship with the ELCA, described it as

Paul Vasile is a freelance church musician, consultant, and composer based in St. Louis, Missouri, who serves as executive director of Music that Makes Community and as director of music at Eden Theological Seminary.

an experience of “deeply relational singing where singers need to trust the leader and the leader needs to trust the singers, allowing the assembly of singers to bear responsibility for the song.”

What shifts in a congregation’s voice when the authority to make music together is shared? We’ve seen leaders like John Bell or Alice Parker lovingly coax a melody out of a timid congregation. And while none of us can imitate their exact approach, they invite and inspire participation, making it clear every voice is indispensable. Paperless singing is an effective tool for supporting this kind of mutual trust and encouragement, especially for those who enjoy singing but feel lacking in skill or confidence, or those who have been silenced or “vocally disenfranchised.”

One of the first things I do when meeting a new congregation or group is invite them to learn a paperless song. Without much explanation or introduction, I’ll line out the melody, indicating when to echo. In a short time, patterns of listening and responding become intuitive. Using gestures, eye contact, and sometimes a little sung instruction when details are unclear, we learn something together, and that shared experience is deeply satisfying.

More than just a way to “break the ice” or “get people singing,” I’ve come to understand this as a practice of hospitality that welcomes a group to collaborate in making music. Just as a thoughtful host organizes the details of a gathering so guests can navigate it gracefully, I imagine paperless song leadership in a similar spirit. Both the structure of my teaching and the generosity I extend to the group as they learn help set the tone. As the group comes to trust that the space (and the song) welcomes them authentically, they can relax into the experience. And it’s at this point, like a great party or a gathering of dear friends, where playfulness, laughter, and even tears often appear.

As accessible as oral tradition singing may seem, it’s worth noting that it may feel new or “contemporary” to those who have not experienced it before, especially in church. It can be especially challenging or disorienting to trained musicians and choirs who privilege the authority of the printed page and are eager to sing the right notes. Noticing the anxiety that can appear in these situations signals me to deepen my listening as a leader, paying attention to moments the group is unsure and taking care to repeat challenging intervals or phrases. It often means slowing down the process, “moving at the speed of trust” as author, activist, and healer adrienne maree brown describes in *Emergent Strategy*.

At its best, paperless singing offers a model of musical hospitality that blesses the diverse musical gifts and experiences within the community, helping mitigate the fear, anxiety, or performance expectations that often limit or squelch participation. This kind of hospitality blurs distinctions between insider and outsider and rejects false boundaries and binaries. I wince when I hear a song leader say, “We all know this, right? If you don’t, just sing along until you get it.” But a generous practice assumes a guest or visitor is always present, offering a moment of learning whenever we gather, even briefly.

In my experience, this vision of leadership opens doors to deeper participation in worship and to other dimensions of community life beyond it. For when our voices are encouraged, when we believe our voices matter, when we discover our untapped abilities to learn and lead, we make discoveries that reach into the rest of our lives.

Because paperless singing isn’t a genre but a practice of music making, it can be used in a wide variety of contexts. I’ve experienced it in small congregations with limited resources, where volunteer musicians lead with great enthusiasm. And I’ve seen paperless songs shared in cathedrals and churches with professionally staffed music programs.

Paperless singing need not be limited to global song or more contemporary styles, but can include chants, hymns (especially with refrains), canons/rounds, and even more experimental and improvised music. Varying the forms and styles of the paperless music we teach keeps ears engaged and can broaden the community’s repertoire of sung praise and prayer in meaningful ways.

Practically speaking, where might one begin to introduce paperless music to a community? How can it become a practice that builds connection and confidence in singers of all ages and ability levels? How does it become an intuitive and meaningful way of making music together?

While it might seem counterintuitive, I encourage musicians and pastors who attend Music that Makes Community workshops to begin by modeling the practice outside of worship. Where are places in your community where singing might add energy, a sense of direction, space to reflect, or a moment of connection? Here are a few opportunities I’ve found especially effective:

- The first agenda item for many committees and governance boards is usually to approve the minutes from their last meetings. But what might change if the meeting began with a sung invocation: "Come, Light of Lights, into our hearts. Come, Wisdom of Spirit, into our hearts"? Ruth Cunningham's short setting of this Celtic prayer invites a space of wonder and humility.
- Sung blessings for church (or family) meals are another way to experience paperless singing, and there are so many options outside of the few we often default to. I love Federico Pagura's short, lyrical tune "*Bendice Señor nuestro pan*/ God Bless to Us Our Bread," for how quickly it can be learned in both Spanish and English.
- Singing is a powerful way to help sustain focus at congregational meetings and gatherings where there is lots of speaking. I've often shared the Kenyan praise song "*Kanisa litajengwa*/Oh, Who Will Build the Church Now?" or Dr. Vincent Harding's "We Are Building Up a New World" to remind us that we're doing the work together.
- In my experience, Bible study and prayer groups are often the first to welcome experiences of paperless singing. Ana Hernández's flowing, layered chant "Open My Heart" quiets the mind and body. While the melody easily stands alone, additional layers can be added as the group gains confidence.
- Paperless songs have been essential to movements for justice and equity and can support and amplify our public witness. Songs like "Lead with Love" by Bay Area vocal activist Melanie DeMore take us from the pews to streets with a powerful exhortation to show up with love in the face of fear and bigotry.
- A litany of confession incorporating a paperless *Kyrie eleison* can engage mind, body, and heart. Many of the short settings in our hymnals can be taught without paper. In a similar vein, a response to the Assurance of Pardon like "*Gloria a Dios*/Glory to God," from the ecumenical Lima Liturgy, builds energy as phrases are echoed by the assembly and layers of harmony build.
- Singing paperless Prayers of Illumination or Gospel Acclamations can help prepare our hearts (and ears) to hear the Word. One of the first I introduced to a congregation was "Listen Now for the Gospel," a call and response song adapted from Zimbabwe that calls us to attention.
- While longer prayers or liturgical responses can be challenging to sing without paper, several composers have used call and echo techniques to break them into short phrases. There are varied paperless settings of the *Sanctus*/Holy, Holy, Holy (at least two by John Bell), and several sung versions of The Lord's Prayer.
- Without a bulletin or hymnal in our hands we can experience prayer with our bodies. Ruth Cunningham's setting of St. Patrick's Breastplate, "Christ Be with Me," invites gestures to the right and left, above and below. The Rev. Sylvia Miller-Mutia, a trained dancer and Episcopal priest, has incorporated ASL and movement into paperless songs, and her YouTube channel and blog are full of resources.
- We can also sing as we move in our worship spaces or during moments of ritual action. I've shared paperless songs during the distribution of communion by intinction, during renewal of baptism liturgies that invite us to visit the font, and in the Passing of Peace.

As paperless singing becomes part of how a community prays, plays, and works together, I encourage clergy and musicians to trust their instincts about where and when to include it in worship. Perhaps it begins with a liturgical season—a paperless song for the lighting of Advent candles or an Easter Alleluia. Repetition is key, so commit to a song for several weeks so the community can deepen into the practice over time.

It's also helpful to pay attention to places where the flow or energy of the liturgy is served by visual and aural connection, or the dialogue paperless singing easily facilitates. Here are just a few examples:

So, how much paper does a congregation need? It surely needs some, but I hope this brief reflection has offered a sense of how the practice of paperless singing, alongside the models of singing we know and treasure, can invite spaces of participation, hospitality, creativity, and listening. Singing without paper can feel risky and vulnerable, but the gifts it brings to communities are significant and carry the potential to transform how we are in relationship with each other.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has created significant challenges as well as creative opportunities over the past year and a half, I believe the practice of paperless singing is one of the tools that can help

reengage and strengthen congregational voices after a time apart.

During a visit to a congregation in Northern California earlier this summer, the first Sunday they were able to sing in the building with masks, I taught "*La paz de la tierra*/The Peace of the Earth" to close the service. I lined out the refrain, inviting them to softly echo each phrase, "Deep peace, falling over you. God's peace growing in you." And as we came to the end of the song, I invited them to turn toward the center aisle, meet the eyes of the worshipers across from them, and offer a blessing of peace.

I vividly remember the tenderness and connection we shared in that moment, and the faint sound of some cautious harmony. I found tears welling up in my eyes and felt gratitude for a practice that invited us to again experience the beauty, love, and healing power we find singing together.

Kelly Rider

The Teaching Ministry of Congregational Song [1]

David W. Music

The singing of the congregation fulfills many different functions. Historically, the functions of the church have been described as worship, evangelism, education or teaching, ministry, and fellowship.

One of the unique features of congregational song is its usefulness in each of these functions. While the principal topic of this article is the teaching ministry of congregational song, it is necessary to say a few words about its relationship to the other functions.

As an act of worship, congregational song provides opportunities for people to speak directly to God, for God to speak directly to people, and for people to speak to one another. On our own, we may have difficulty knowing exactly what we should say to God, but hymn and song writers provide words that help us express these inexpressible thoughts. Likewise, through the words of the songs we sing, God can give us both instruction and inspiration.

There is a bit more that needs to be said about this worship function of congregational song. First, hymn and song writers have—appropriately—been rather hesitant to have God speak to us by putting words into his mouth. There are, of course, some songs that do this. As long as the writer stays within the parameters of the biblical revelation, this is a perfectly appropriate way of writing. Generally, however, the most effective way of accomplishing this line of communication from God to people is through the singing of direct or versified Scripture.

By the same token, hymns that allow people to speak to God are often best employed as a response to Scripture or its exposition. Certainly, we can tell God that we love him any time, anywhere, and in any manner, but we need to be careful to ground our worship in divine revelation to make sure we are praising and praying to the right God and not one of our own making.

As an act of evangelism, congregational singing provides a nonthreatening environment for the proclamation of the gospel. Putting words of witness and commitment into the mouths of unbelievers is a powerful means of sharing the gospel message with them. Congregational singing can also be a time when believers are reminded of their responsibility for the conversion of those for whom Jesus died.

As an act of ministry, congregational song allows people to speak to one another by way of encouragement, to give them words of healing and comfort, and to serve as an outlet for grief or joy. It can also be a motivator for congregants to engage in other types of ministry activity.

Many hymns and songs speak directly to the fellowship of believers, encouraging unity in the body of Christ and promoting mutual love. But, in truth, the very act of singing together is one of fellowship. In group singing, each person must play his or her part, and we rely upon each other to carry the song. Even in cases where people cannot sing because of illness or for other reasons, the congregation can carry the song for them. To paraphrase a common saying about prayer in families, "The church that sings together clings together."

And so we turn to what is perhaps the most neglected aspect of congregational song in today's church, its teaching ministry. Several brief explanations are in order as we begin.

The emphasis here is primarily on songs that are stanzaic in form, that is, ones that contain several stanzas with or without a refrain.[2] This limitation

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is not to deny the validity of other forms such as doxologies or choruses. However, because of their larger scope, stanzaic forms perhaps better fit a teaching function while short forms are best suited to other functions, such as praise or prayer. (This is also not to say that stanzaic forms cannot function as praise or prayer, for quite obviously they can.) It should be further noted that "teaching ministry" includes not only the teaching of complex or esoteric doctrines such as the Trinity or the eternal security of the believer—though those are included—but also the simpler ones that affect our daily lives, such as faith, hope, love, and trust in God. Finally, the songs that will be used for illustration were almost all written by Isaac Watts. This is because he was one of the pioneers of the typical congregational song form and is one of its acknowledged masters.[3]

Throughout the Bible and Christian history, it has been recognized that song is one of the best and most effective means for teaching the fundamentals of the faith. The thirty-first chapter of Deuteronomy describes Moses' preparation for his own death. This was an event that would leave the children of Israel without the leader who had guided them from the Exodus to the Promised Land. Recognizing this fact, the Lord gave a command to Moses to provide something that would help the people remember how God had delivered them. What did God tell Moses to do? Write a book? No. Preach a sermon? No. He told him to write a song that would remind the people of God's deliverances, promising that the song "shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed" (Deut. 31:21, KJV). In the New Testament, the apostle Paul encouraged the Colossian believers to "teach and admonish [or correct] one another . . . with . . . psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" (Col. 3:16).

Augustine of Hippo, in an oft-quoted passage from the *Confessions*, noted that the songs of the church "poured into my ears and dissolved truth in my heart." Martin Luther said that, by means of song, "God's word and Christian doctrine may be instilled and practiced on a regular basis." John Calvin compared songs to "spurs" that can "incite us to prayer and to praise God, to meditate on his works, in order to love, fear, honor, and glorify him." John Wesley called his *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists* of 1780 "a little body of experimental [i.e., experiential] and practical divinity."[4]

So what is it about congregational singing that makes it such a widely acknowledged and powerful teacher of the Christian faith? I would suggest that there are six principal reasons.

The Emotional Power of Poetry and Music

First, hymns are effective teaching devices because they combine theological ideas with the emotional power of poetry and music. Words convey rational meaning. Certainly, words can often be imprecise and vary in meaning. Nevertheless, words provide a certain amount of concrete information. When you say the word "tree," it conjures up a particular image or meaning; trees come in many different sizes, shapes, and varieties, and the simple word "tree" may not indicate any specific one, but it does at least tell us that—as one definition puts it—we are talking about "a perennial plant with an elongated stem or trunk supporting branches and leaves," something other than what would be understood if we said the word "bear."

Words are also combined to provide us with a way of communication that is more or less rational and concrete. It is through words that Christians express and shape their beliefs by the reading of Scripture, the saying of creeds and confessions, preaching, and the writing or reading of theological commentaries. Our understanding of Christian belief is largely formed by words. As the Scriptures themselves put it, "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1).

Just as in Scripture, creeds and confessions, preaching, and theological writings, hymns and songs also make use of words, but they do so in a way that is different from each of these, for congregational song uses words in the form of poetry. Metrical stress, rhyme, poetic devices, form, and other features give poetry an emotional component that is often missing from plain speech. Poetry tends to heighten—or even create—sensations of joy or sorrow, pain or pleasure, sensations that ordinary conversation or speech can seldom accomplish. The result of the combination of rational thought (that is, words) with emotional arrangement (poetry) creates a unity that makes memorization and thus internalization easier and more long-lasting. As Isaac Watts put it in the preface to his *Divine Songs Attempted in Easy Language for the Use of Children* (1715), "What is learnt in Verse is longer retain'd in Memory, and sooner recollected."

Poetry also often expresses ideas in an indirect manner that allows scope for expanded meaning. It is one thing to say that Jesus' crucified body bled on the cross. It is another to express the same thought in the following stanza from Watts's "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross":

> See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
> Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
> Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
> Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

Watts's stanza paints a vivid picture of the blood flowing down from the head, to the hands, to the feet, yet he never mentions the word "blood." Instead, he substitutes the terms "sorrow" and "love," picturing for us that Jesus' shed blood is a symbol of his sorrow and love for those he came to save.

But there is more to this stanza than immediately meets the eye. The third line reverses "sorrow" and "love" to become "love" and "sorrow," a poetic device that is known as *chiasmus*, the "crossing"—catch the implication there—of words or clauses. The Greek letter *chi* is not only a symbol of the cross but is also the first letter in the word "Christ." This suggests that Watts has placed both a symbol of the cross and of Christ's name in the very heart of this stanza. And since in Watts's original publication of this hymn, this was the middle of the five stanzas, this symbol of the cross and the Messiah who was hung on it are literally at the very center of the text. This goes far beyond merely saying that Jesus shed his blood on the cross.

Poetry is also able to hold things in tension. Christianity is full of paradoxes: there is one God who exists in three persons; God is simultaneously immanent and transcendent; death was destroyed by death; and so on. Poetry can often express these paradoxes in a meaningful way, as can be seen from another portion of Watts's hymn.

> My richest gain I count but loss
> And pour contempt on all my pride.

Here a caution needs to be placed about the relationship between plain speech and poetry, and that is not to be overly literal in the interpretation of hymn texts or to read into them things that they do not say. In writing or speaking prose, we generally strive above all for clarity and precision of meaning. Poetry, on the other hand, often works by metaphor, simile, and allegory, in which words may be used to stand for something other than their literal meaning. When we do only a surface reading, try to read them too literally, or make them say what they do not, we miss the point entirely.

Here is an example: particularly after Hurricane Katrina, some criticized the following lines from Watts's "I sing th'almighty power of God."

> There's not a plant or flower below
> But makes thy glories known,
> And clouds arise and tempests blow
> By order from thy throne.

The suggestion of the critics was that the third and fourth lines of the stanza say that God sends natural disasters to kill people, perhaps as punishment for their sins or simply as an act of wanton cruelty. But the hymn does not say that at all, and this is an example of reading into a text something that is not there.

First of all, there is no mention of sin, punishment, or even people in the stanza. Second, Watts was not referring to God sending specific storms but that God ordered "Let there be clouds and tempests" much as he said "Let there be light," without at first specifying the sources or target of that light.

Third, lines three and four must be read in the context of lines one and two: the plants and flowers that make God's glory known have to have water, which he provided for in clouds and tempests. Finally, if natural disasters overtake humans, it is usually because *we* are in the wrong place. If you make your home in places that are frequented by blizzards, drought, earthquakes, tornados, or hurricanes, you are pretty likely to encounter one of them.

All this is to say that we must sometimes give congregational songs a little leeway in interpreting and understanding what they mean. As will be suggested later, this does not mean that "anything goes," but that we must understand that poetry cannot be—indeed, should not be—as prosaic as, well, prose.

So in hymnody, the rational content of words is linked with the emotional content of poetry. But obviously there is another element, and that is music. More will be said about music in the teaching role of hymns later; here we simply note that music, like poetry, provokes an emotional response that heightens the impact and the memorability of what we sing.

This combination of rational content and emotional engagement is powerful. People tend to remember things better when there is both a rational and an emotional component in what they are doing. If we want people to know and understand the principles of the Christian faith, one of the best ways to do so is to combine those truths with the emotional expression provided by poetry and music.

An Intentionally Memorable Form

A second aspect of the teaching ministry of hymnody is that it is couched in an intentionally memorable form. Here we are concerned principally with forms that are specifically intended to aid memorization. These include stanzaic structures, refrains, poetic and hymnic meters, rhymes, strophic tunes, and other features.

The use of such mnemonic forms is something that is well known in elementary education. How is it that many children learn the alphabet? By singing the "alphabet song" (example 1).

Ex. 1

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V

doub-le U X Y and Z. Now I know my A - B - Cs. Won't you sing a - long with me?

Several things should be noted about this song. First, the letters have been grouped in such a way that they are sung using a steady beat. Also, these stresses have been arranged into four groups of four beats each: "ab-cd-ef-g" followed by "hi-jk-lmno-p," then "qr-s-tu-v," and finally "w [double u]-x-y and-z."

Rhyme has been applied, with the first two groups of letters ending with "g" and "p," and the last two groups with "v" and "z." There are other subtleties in this song that enhance its memorability, particularly the way that the letters "s" and "x" are in the same beat position and both begin with an "eh" sound. By placing the letters in a recurring rhythmic framework and making them rhyme, the memorability of the alphabet is enhanced. The melody to which the letters and words are sung is repetitive, with the opening and closing phrases sung to the same melody and the middle lines also repeating. Nor does it hurt that the melody is familiar from a nursery rhyme, "Twinkle, twinkle, little star."

Hymnody does a similar thing for the church's teaching. For example, read the following stanza from "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" aloud.

> Before the hills in order stood,
> Or earth received her frame,
> From everlasting thou art God,
> To endless years the same.

Note how the regularly recurring rhythm and the rhymes give a sense of forward motion in much the same manner as the alphabet song, pulling the reader or singer along to the next thought. These features help the singer anticipate the next line or rhyming word, enhancing the memorability of the text and ultimately its meaning—that God was infinite before there was an earth, and he will still be infinite after this world is gone.

Certainly, not every congregational song has to have a regular metrical rhythm or rhyme or any of the other typical features of hymnic poetry to be memorable. One thinks, for instance, of "O Come, All Ye Faithful," which is highly irregular metrically and contains not a single rhyme, yet is widely known and teaches important fundamentals of the Christian faith. However, such songs tend to be the exception rather than the rule.

The music of congregational song, of course, also plays an important part in the form's memorability. The singing of a group of stanzas to a repeating melody ingrains the music into the memory, which—in a bit of turnabout—then helps the words themselves to be recalled. This is especially true when the words have a "proper" tune, that is, one that is almost invariably associated with that particular text. For example, the singing of the phrase in example 2 will call to mind a specific line of text, which then will almost inevitably lead to completion of at least the first stanza in our minds.

Ex. 2

Compression

A third aspect of hymnody that makes it an effective teaching device is its use of "compression," expressing profound theological truths in brief form. Compression puts these truths into what might be called a "digestible" form for more ready consumption.

In this sense, hymns are often like aphorisms or pithy sayings. Think, for instance, of Benjamin Franklin's "A penny saved is a penny earned." This simple statement is actually rather profound. If you have a penny, you can either spend it or save it. If you save it, you still have the penny, whereas if you spend it, you will have to earn another one to replace the penny you spent. The previous two sentences used forty words to explain what Franklin said in seven. His seven short words open up a whole realm of expanded meaning.

For example, take these two lines that end Watts's "My Shepherd Will Supply My Need," a version of Psalm 23; when we "dwell in the house of the Lord," we will be

> No more a stranger or a guest,
> But like a child at home.

These fourteen syllables provide a summative picture of the progression of faith. In God's house, we will not be a stranger (someone who is unknown to the occupant) or a guest (someone who is known but unrelated to the occupant), but a child at home (the occupant's own offspring). The words "no more" suggest that at one time the singer *was* a stranger to God, and a guest who received an invitation, but is now God's own child, a resident of the home and an heir to all that God has.

Consider the depth of meaning in the following short phrases from songs by various writers:

> "I once was lost, but now am found, /
> Was blind but now I see"
> ("Amazing Grace")

> "Very God, begotten, not created" ("O Come, All Ye Faithful")

> "God moves in a mysterious way /
> His wonders to perform"
> ("God Moves in a Mysterious Way")

> "He wraps himself in light, / and darkness tries to hide"
> ("How Great Is Our God")

> "Those wounds yet visible above /
> In beauty glorified"
> ("Crown Him with Many Crowns")

> "No guilt in life, no fear in death, /
> This is the power of Christ in me"
> ("In Christ Alone")

> "Ours the cross, the grave, the skies"
> ("Christ the Lord Is Risen Today")

> "Amazing love! how can it be / That thou my God shouldst die for me"
> ("And Can It Be")

> "Love so amazing, so divine / Demands my soul, my life, my all"
> ("When I Survey")

Such concentration of thought into a few short words drives the ideas into our minds and hearts to be recalled as we need them.

Active Participation

There is a fourth component of congregational song that makes it a valuable tool for Christian teaching, and that is its call for active participation. It is a well-known dictum in education that we learn best by doing. You can read books all day long about how to write a sonnet, play the violin, or throw a curve ball; you can read sonnets by other people, hear violinists play, and watch a pitcher throw curve balls—but you cannot really *know* these activities until you have been physically involved in them. It takes your own physical and mental exertion truly to learn these skills. This is a further secret of the alphabet song—children are actively engaged in singing it, and that physical exertion plays an important role in its effectiveness.

By the same token, we learn Christian belief best when both our minds and our bodies are actively engaged. Singing requires physical exertion—at a minimum, we must take and expel breath, and make vocal sounds; perhaps we will also be standing or holding a hymnal as we do so. The mind will be engaged as we read words and perhaps notes, and try to read or remember what comes next. Indeed, consider the number of senses that may be involved in congregational singing—certainly hearing, usually sight, perhaps touch if one is holding a hymnal, and (if the hymnal is old enough) maybe even smell! Only taste is left out, but we will leave that one for communion.

This combination of mental and physical exertion is almost—if not indeed—unique in the

teaching of religion. It is an important factor in making congregational singing memorable.

Repeatable

A fifth aspect in the teaching ministry of hymns is that they can be repeated frequently. People seldom read the same theological books over and over again. Preachers who preach an identical sermon seven or eight times in a year will soon be looking for a new pulpit. However, people do not seem to tire of singing the same songs many times over. In fact, the more they are repeated, the more quickly they seem to become "old favorites." Now there is obviously a limit to this, but it is nevertheless true that most people do not mind repeating songs.

It is certainly no secret that frequent repetition helps ingrain songs, and thus information, into people. Think of the songs that you know best, whether Christian or not. Invariably, there will have been frequent repetition of them in some form or fashion. Frequent hearing—or, in our case, singing—of songs is indeed like what John Calvin described: a funnel that pours the message of the song directly into our hearts, and, we might add, also into our minds.[5]

Association with Past Experience

There is a sixth item that makes hymnody memorable, and that is the possibility of association with past experience. When a song or hymn is connected in our minds with a previous event or time in our life, it can be a powerful stimulus for remembering that song and its message.

We do need to be a bit careful here, making sure that such associations are based on emotional and rational responses rather than mere sentimentality, which can be defined as "emotion that is not based on reality." Emotion is a God-given gift to us that is part of what makes us human. Sentimentality forgets the reason for the emotion and simply wallows in the emotion itself. To avoid mere sentimentality, we need to link to the objective content of what the song says as well as the occasion on which it was sung.

Our Responsibility

Congregational song is a valuable tool in catechizing into the faith. It is certainly not the only tool, and song has usefulness in other areas of the life of the church, but it is without a doubt one of the most effective teaching devices at our disposal.

With that in mind, it is important to remember that the leaders of the church's song have some responsibilities in ensuring the effectiveness of this teaching. Here are several things to which attention must be paid.

In the first place—and perhaps most obviously—our songs must have something to say. As noted earlier, there is certainly a place in our services for songs that are minimalistic in structure. However, when we choose songs for teaching purposes—as we have a responsibility to do—we should always ask ourselves, "Does this song have a message? What does it tell us about the Christian faith?"

Second, it is critical that what the song says is *true*. The fact that a song is popular or was written by an eighteenth-century hymn writer does not necessarily mean that it is true. Our songs do not have to be theologically profound but they at least need to express truth. They must be measured against the Scripture and the theological formations of our faith to ensure that what we are singing and learning is accurate and correct.

At the same time, we need to be cautious not to place too much theological weight on a single hymn or song. In a legal proceeding, a witness is admonished to "tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Our songs should certainly tell the truth and nothing but the truth, but we cannot expect any single song to tell the "whole truth." One could readily criticize Watts's "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" because it contains no mention of the resurrection or "Joy to the World" because it has no references to Bethlehem, baby, stable, manger, shepherds, Mary, Joseph, angels, Wise Men, star, gold, frankincense, or myrrh. Such critiques would be entirely true but beside the point, for Watts's purpose in the first hymn was to emphasize Jesus' sacrifice and in the second to affirm the universal reign of Christ.

It is important to recognize that no song—indeed, no song, sermon, prayer, book, *or all of them together*—contains the whole truth of God. That truth is to be found only in the person of Jesus Christ, and in a song we can only hope to capture some aspects of it. When we lay any of our songs, even the most profound of them, next to Christ, they will always come up short. But to return to and reiterate the main point, it is critical that our songs contain the truth about God and about ourselves.

Third, our people and our song writers must be taught to pay more attention to the words. It is important for the songs we sing to be attractive musically, to have tunes that make people want to sing them. However, if we stop there, we are shortchanging both the song and the people, not to mention the Lord. If it is the music that gives life to the words, it is the text that gives meaning to the music and ultimately is the reason for its singing. People need to be encouraged to sing, as the apostle Paul put it, "with the understanding" as well as with the "spirit" (1 Cor. 14:15).

Fourth, the teaching ministry of hymnody is most effective when the songs are memorized, when they have become internalized and can be called to mind as needed without hymnals, song sheets, or screens. The practice of hymn memorization should be encouraged, particularly among children and youth, but really among all age levels.

Fifth, and directly related to memorization is repetition. Music leaders quite naturally often want to sing new songs, but congregants need significant repetition for the songs to become internalized and become meaningful carriers of belief and doctrine.

Those of us who lead the song ministry of the church have both a great responsibility and a great opportunity to help people know and understand the truth and mercy of the Lord. As biblical literacy declines in both the general and church populations, as doctrinal preaching and teaching becomes less frequent, and as private devotional reading declines, it may well be the songs of the church that offer the best hope for the continued growth of God's people in the faith. We have in our hands a powerful tool. May God grant the grace and the wisdom to use it in a meaningful and effective manner.

Notes

1. This article is a revision of the Northcutt Lecture in Church Music delivered at Baylor University, Waco, Texas, on April 6, 2021.
2. In addition to items in traditional hymnic form, this includes many contemporary Christian songs, which are often stanzaic in structure. Throughout this article the word "hymn" will be used in a generic sense to include any type of stanzaic Christian song, be it chant, traditional hymn, gospel song, or contemporary Christian piece.
3. Several of the discussions of Watts hymns in this article are based on those in my book *Repeat the Sounding Joy: Reflections on Hymns by Isaac Watts* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2020).
4. These quotations are all taken from David W. Music, *Hymnology: A Collection of Source Readings* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1996), 10, 39, 67, 142.
5. Music, *Hymnology*, 67.

Militant Masculinity in Contemporary Worship Music

T. J. Shirley

Introduction

The insurgency of January 6, 2021, will indeed become a pivotal point in any future telling of the history of the United States of America. Like many others, I was working from home since our church's offices were closed in response to COVID-19. I was unable to pull myself away from television and social media, and unfortunately watched all of the happenings of that day in real time. It stirred within me grief and rage coated in a thick shell of fear. I wept over the condition of the nation, was enraged at the people whose political experimentation had brought us to this place, and was, and still am, afraid that this would become the new "normal" in American life. The events of that day left me utterly dumbfounded.

As I watched this insurrection take place, I noticed Christian symbolism pervasive among the crowd. A coalition of organizations that deemed themselves "Jericho March" was there to march around the boundaries of the US Capitol, reenacting the story of Joshua leading the Israelites to march around the walls of Jericho. People were clutching Bibles, crosses, and rosaries as they entered the Capitol building. Others held signs that said "Jesus Saves" and "Jesus 2020" made in the style of the campaign branding of the person from whom they thought the election had been stolen. A flag that has become known as the "Christian flag" was flown in a chamber of Congress. As I watched, I kept asking myself, "What is going on?! How did such a broad swath of American Christianity end up in this place?"

In *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*, Kristin Kobes Du Mez attempts to answer this question. Though the forward to her book was written three months prior to the events on January 6, 2021, Kobes Du Mez leaves no doubt that something as momentous as that day was inevitable because a militant Christian masculinity has been imbedded at the core of white American evangelicalism. "Weaving together family matters, domestic politics, and a foreign policy agenda, militant masculinity came to reside at the heart of a larger evangelical identity."[1] Kobes Du Mez names John Wayne, in both his onscreen performances and his life offscreen, as the quintessence of the militant masculinity at the heart of white American evangelicalism. To achieve this, a separate white evangelical culture was created. "[Conservative evangelicals] achieved . . . dominance not only by crafting a compelling ideology but also by advancing their agenda through strategic organizations and political alliances, on occasion by way of ruthless displays of power, and, critically, by dominating the production and distribution of Christian consumer culture."[2] An examination of this culture is vital because "evangelicalism lacks clear institutional authority structures, but the evangelical marketplace itself helps define who is inside and who is outside the fold."[3] Kobes Du Mez extensively details the history of white American evangelicalism, which has helped to shape and define the militant masculinity pervasive in it, by examining political and ecclesial leaders, books and curricula important to the cause, and conferences and crusades like Promise Keepers. She also identifies other aspects that have played a role in bringing about this conservative evangelical culture; these include "Christian books and magazines, Christian contemporary music, Christian radio and television, feature films, ministry conferences, blogs, T-shirts, and home décor."[4]

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This article will seek to analyze specifically the contemporary worship music used to reinforce and promote this culture of militant masculinity that has led to Christian nationalism among many white American evangelicals.

While Kobes Du Mez does an excellent job detailing the personalities and philosophies that established the militant masculinity and nationalism embedded in white American evangelicalism, she does not explore all aspects of this culture in depth. Therefore, this article will seek to analyze specifically the contemporary worship music used to reinforce and promote this culture of militant masculinity that has led to Christian nationalism among many white American evangelicals.

Methodology

While some churches that espouse the militant masculinity described by Kobes Du Mez use more traditional hymnody, a majority use contemporary worship music (CWM) in their services. Among many white American evangelicals, there is actually hostility to traditional worship styles. James MacDonald, pastor of a Southern Baptist megachurch, demonstrates this antipathy toward traditional worship in this potentially triggering commentary on the periodical *Christianity Today*: "CT is Anglican, pseudo-dignity, high church, symphony-adoring, pipe organ-protecting, musty, mild smell of urine, blue-haired Methodist-loving, mainline-dying, women preacher-championing, emerging church-adoring, almost good with all gays and closet Palestine-promoting Christianity"[5] With such a culture of hostility toward traditional hymnody, it is necessary to consider CWM as the vehicle this movement uses to instill its teaching through congregational song.

There is no perfect term for what is known as CWM. While a literal meaning of the term could include any worship music written recently, CWM refers to a specific genre of music with its own history, common practices, and subgenres. Mark Glaeser and Richard Webb give perhaps the most complete definition of CWM:

> This term [contemporary worship music] has been used to describe a host of diverse worship music styles developed within the last forty years. Among others, contemporary music embraces folk, country, rock 'n' roll, praise, alternative, and the eclectic music of the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic tradition. While each of these styles stands as a musical genre in its own right, some of them having numerous subgenres, all of them hold enough in common to come under the umbrella of "contemporary music." In particular, these genres share a common emphasis of strong accented rhythm, orally conceived melodies, roots reaching back to the African American spiritual and Appalachian folk traditions, and accompaniment styles based on the unique technical possibilities and limitations of the guitar. Contemporary music is also set apart from traditional music in that it is usually performed by an ensemble combination of keyboards, guitars, bass, drums, melody, instruments, and vocalists.[6]

Other terms that are often used interchangeably with CWM are "praise and worship" music and "contemporary Christian music." I have chosen to use CWM rather than these two terms because "praise and worship" often refers to a specific subgenre of CWM and "contemporary Christian music" encompasses music that is meant only for radio or entertainment purposes.

To demonstrate the militant masculinity present in CWM, I will use a form of evaluation Robert Woods and Brian Walrath employ in their book *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship*. To compile a canon of music to analyze, they used lists of the top ranked songs from Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI). They describe CCLI as the "major clearinghouse for the handling of license fees paid in by churches and paid out as royalties for CWM."[7] Founded in 1984, CCLI currently holds licensing agreements for more than 100,000 contemporary worship songs.[8] It currently licenses more than 250,000 churches worldwide that are required to report their usage of music on a weekly basis.[9]

Since CCLI has no real competition for the licensing and reporting of CWM, it is the best resource

to demonstrate the theology and culture present in CWM. CCLI does not offer a perfect picture of CWM, though. First, songs that are in the public domain are not reported to CCLI. There are also resources like OneLicense that license music generally used by more traditional styles of worship. So, if more traditional hymnody is sung, it is not reflected in CCLI's reporting. Second, while more than 250,000 churches hold licenses, CCLI does not report how many people this encompasses. Statistics for how large these churches are and how many services they hold are not readily available. Finally, Kobes Du Mez particularly focuses on white American evangelicals in her analysis. CCLI, however, has an international reach and does not release reports by country. Nor do they report any kind of demographic statistics. Of the more than 250,000 organizations that use CCLI, more than 160,000 of those churches are in North America.[10] Even though an overwhelming majority of CWM held by CCLI is written by Americans, there is strong international representation, especially from the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand. While specific analysis of American churches cannot be done, CCLI still sets the standard for what CWM is promoted to these churches. Also, due to the influence American musicians and churches have in CWM, it can be safely assumed that CCLI's reporting still provides a broad picture of CWM in the United States.

When Woods and Walrath published their book in 2007, CCLI released a Top 25 list of the most reported songs by its licensees twice a year. Woods and Walrath used these lists to form a canon of 77 songs that appeared at least once in the Top 25. CCLI no longer releases these Top 25 lists but has transitioned to a Top 100 list that is updated more regularly. Archives of previous Top 100 lists are not available. While the Top 25 lists were helpful to track movement in CWM, the Top 100 list gives a more accurate snapshot of what CWM looks like at this specific point in time. The Top 100 list to be used for this article was accessed on May 12, 2021. It includes 12 songs written before 2000, 20 songs written between 2000 and 2010, 29 songs written between 2010 and 2015, and 39 songs written after 2015.

Patriarchy

Kobes Du Mez has identified a patriarchal family structure as the bedrock of white American evangelicals' movement to Christian nationalism. The only type of families they deem appropriate are made up of cisgender, heterosexual couples and their children. The father of the family is ordained by God to be the sole head of the household. "God designed man to be the aggressor, provider, and leader of his family."[11] The mother of the family, then, is the subservient caregiver who is responsible for meeting the needs of her husband and coddling his fragile ego. Gender in white American evangelical teaching is not just a sociological identifier, but "reside[s] at the level of the soul."[12] Upon this framework the rest of white American evangelical culture is built. "The reassertion of an authoritarian family structure would preserve order, discipline, and security—not only of the family but of the nation."[13]

To examine how CWM might help to reinforce this patriarchal worldview, we must first look at who is writing CWM.

To examine how CWM might help to reinforce this patriarchal worldview, we must first look at who is writing CWM. Of the 143 songwriters who contributed to the Top 100, 112 of them are men and 31 are women. Women songwriters contributed to 36 of the Top 100, but only 6 songs were written exclusively by female artists. This is a concerning trend as a similar study I conducted in 2014 included 18 songs for which women songwriters were solely responsible.[14] The other 30 songs with female contributors were written as part of a team with male counterparts. This could be indicative of a larger trend in CWM to produce music as a team of songwriters instead of individuals writing music by themselves. In my study from 2014, there were only 9 songs written by a team comprised of men and women. However, it is still of great note that of the Top 100, only 6 songs come from a distinctly feminine perspective while 64 songs come from a distinctly masculine perspective.

Pronoun usage can also give a helpful picture of what influence CWM might be playing in reinforcing militant masculinity in white American evangelicalism. Eighty-eight of the Top 100 use the first-person singular pronouns I/me/my, while only 55 songs use the first-person plural, we/us/our. This could signify that an individual's actions and relationship with God is seen as more important than experiencing God in community. This "go-it-alone" attitude is indicative of the John Wayne persona Kobes Du Mez lifts up.

Eighty-five songs of the Top 100 use the second-person pronouns you/your/yours, 82 of which "you" is referring to God. This demonstrates that one of CWM's purposes is to aid people in direct, personal encounters with God during congregational singing instead of merely ascribing praise to a distant deity in song. The third-person masculine singular pronouns, he/him/his, are used in 40 songs, almost exclusively to refer to God. The only instance where third-person feminine singular pronouns appear is in a song called "Ever Be," which depicts the church as a bride pursued by God:

> You're making me like You
> Clothing me in white
> Beauty from ashes
> For You will have Your bride
> Free of all her guilt and rid of all her shame
> And known by her true name and it's why
> I sing[15]

This only instance of feminine pronoun usage is used to reinforce a "knight in shining armor" narrative that portrays the need to be rescued as a defining aspect of femininity.

CWM's treatment of substitutionary atonement is perhaps the most impactful way it bolsters the patriarchal family structure. While Kobes Du Mez is specifically speaking about a group of evangelicals known as New Calvinists or neo-Reformed, her quote here applies to many groups that make up white American evangelicalism. "They emphasized the existence of hell and the wrath of God, which required Jesus' substitutionary atonement, his bloody death on the cross to atone for humanity's sins. Theirs was a properly masculine theology, the story of a vengeful Father-God taking out his rage on his own Son."[16] Substitutionary atonement depicts the patriarchal father as so authoritative and dominant that his own son will die at his request.

In the Top 100, 56 songs reference Jesus' death on the cross and the salvation it provides. To contrast, only 9 songs reference Jesus' birth and the incarnation of the Word of God in Christ. The concept of substitutionary atonement is often explicit in the Top 100:

> The moon and stars they wept
> The morning sun was dead
> The Savior of the world was fallen
> His body on the cross
> His blood poured out for us
> The weight of every curse upon Him[17]

God the Father is portrayed as simultaneously involved and distant in the death of Jesus:

> How deep the Father's love for us
> How vast beyond all measure
> That He should give His only Son
> To make a wretch His treasure
> How great the pain of searing loss
> The Father turns His face away
> As wounds which mar the Chosen One
> Bring many sons to glory[18]

CWM's treatment of substitutionary atonement can even go so far as to come dangerously close to the heresy of subordinationism:

> Silent as He stood accused
> Beaten mocked and scorned
> Bowing to the Father's will
> He took a crown of thorns[19]

Instead of portraying God's own self-sacrifice, the picture of God the Father imposing his will on a submissive Son threatens the orthodox teaching of the consubstantial nature of the Trinity. It also serves as a model for a family system built on a dominant patriarch who rules his family as he sees fit.

Fight the Fight

The reinforcement of a patriarchal family system does not solely affect the home lives of evangelicals. As stated earlier, the establishment of order and discipline was not only meant to apply to the family unit but to extend to every aspect of life, especially politics. "From the start, evangelical masculinity has been both personal and political. In learning how to be Christian men, evangelicals also learned how to think about sex, guns, war, borders, Muslims, immigrants, the military, foreign policy, and the nation itself."[20] Like in their family, evangelical men are not only supposed to hope and pray for their ideals; they are to enforce this system. "Christians [are] called to fight the Lord's battle, at home and abroad, and seek dominion in His name."[21] Since they believe God has called them to impose this way of life upon others, any method possible should be utilized to fulfill God's calling on their lives as they understand it:

> For both [the political and religious right], the ends justify the means. But it wasn't just tactics that united fellow renegades. Like

> [Oliver] North, conservative evangelicals defined the greater good in terms of Christian nationalism. It was this conflation of God and country that heroic Christian men would advance zealously, and by any means necessary, with their resurgent religious and political power.[22]

Once the family has been conquered, American evangelical men are called to fight to make the United States into their vision of a Christian country.

Distress and anxiety play an important role in instilling this type of thinking. "A militant evangelical masculinity went hand in hand with a culture of fear . . . [F]or conservative white evangelicals, a militant faith required an ever-present sense of threat."[23] CWM helps to stoke this by speaking of fear as something to overcome. Twenty-four songs of the Top 100 address fear as an obstacle to be conquered. Only one song, though, uses positive encouragement like "be brave" or "have courage." Instead of praying for positive attributes to be instilled in people by God, the songs in the Top 100 speak negatively of fear as an outside force that needs to be removed and excised:

> In this time of desperation
> When all we know is doubt and fear
> There is only one foundation
> We believe we believe
> In this broken generation
> When all is dark You help us see
> There is only one salvation
> We believe we believe[24]

This culture of fear, then, calls evangelical men into militancy to fight against what they perceive as the source of their distress.

The way CWM speaks of God also encourages this militant posture. God is the ultimate example of authoritative power. While white American evangelicals search for politicians who are "strong leader[s], [men] who could assert masculine power in the international arena,"[25] they look to God as the ultimate commander and warrior. Referring to God as "Lord" has become so pervasive in Christianity practiced by English-speaking people that it is rarely looked at critically. In the context of a patriarchal militancy, however, the use of an authoritative term like "Lord" in 40 songs of the Top 100 could help to serve the political will of white American evangelicals. God is also referred to as King in 30 songs of the Top 100, and God's reign is spoken of in 9 songs. God as Lord and King is not an example of humble servant leadership, but instead God wields God's omnipotence to make sure God's will is done. In 23 songs of the Top 100, God's power is proclaimed. Twenty-two songs declare God's greatness, 16 songs celebrate God's strength, and 12 songs praise God as mighty. Sometimes, these attributions are ascribed to God in a list:

> Our God is greater
> Our God is stronger
> God You are higher than any other
> Our God is healer
> Awesome in power our God our God[26]

At other times, God's strength and power is described in action:

> He's coming on the clouds
> Kings and kingdoms will bow down
> And every chain will break
> As broken hearts declare His praise
> For who can stop the Lord Almighty[27]

Other, "softer" attributes of God are rarer in the Top 100 songs. God is named as "Comforter" in 3 songs and as "Friend" in 5 songs. God is praised for God's kindness in 9 songs, for compassion in 1 song, and for goodness in 15 songs.

As God is mighty in God's action, American militant evangelicals are likewise called to act powerfully to impose their understanding of God's will onto politics and society. In the past few years, a trend in CWM is to speak of the journey of faith as a path to victory. Life and faith are about winning:

> Walking around these walls
> I thought by now they'd fall
> But you have never failed me yet
> Waiting for change to come
> Knowing the battle's won
> For you have never failed me yet[28]

Seven of the 11 songs on the Top 100 that touch on "victory" or "winning" were written since 2015. The oldest song on the Top 100, "Victory in Jesus" by Eugene M. Bartlett, was written in 1939 but did not enter CCLI's top charts until after 2014! While pinpointing a specific reason for this song's entry

into the top charts is not possible, the focus of white American evangelicalism on triumph must play a significant part.

To accomplish "victory" as militant evangelicals see it, the most disturbing trend in CWM is a turn to language of violence. Douglas Wilson, evangelical leader and founder of New Saint Andrews College, whose motto is "For the faithful, wars shall never cease," deems violence as "important work."[29] In the Top 100, 11 songs contain themes of violence using words like "war," "battle," and "fight." Nine of these 11 songs were written since 2015. While some songs take a more subtle approach, others are blatant in their use of violence to describe the Christian experience:

> The weapon may be formed but it won't prosper
> When the darkness falls it won't prevail
> 'Cause the God I serve knows only how to triumph
> My God will never fail . . .
> There's power in the mighty Name of Jesus
> Every war He wages He will win
> I'm not backing down from any giant
> I know how this story ends[30]

Even the Eucharistic table symbolizes a weapon to brandish:

> There's a table that You've prepared for me
> In the presence of my enemies
> It's Your body and Your blood You shed for me
> This is how I fight my battles[31]

In this framework of militant evangelical masculinity, God's call on a man's life is a call to arms to fight for family, country, and faith.

What Do We Do Now?

This article has identified trends in CWM that echo the militant masculinity that Kobes Du Mez argues has led white American evangelicals to accept Christian nationalism. It is hard to know how much CWM plays a part in actively creating the narrative white American evangelicalism has followed. At the very least, it does play a part in reinforcing a culture of militant masculinity in the name of God.

Although I have been very critical of CWM throughout this article, I am not advocating for churches to discontinue its use. There are contemporary worship songs that are faithful and encourage peace and equality. Indeed, 58 songs of the Top 100 touch upon love, 21 upon mercy, 23 upon hope, and 23 upon grace. My intention is to help churches who use CWM to think more critically about the songs they choose and to be aware of the broader culture in which many of these songs are written. In fact, it would also be useful for us to consider classical hymnody more closely and how worship music might have been used to serve the interests of imperialism and colonialism over the past few hundred years.

Contemporary worship leaders should follow the example of musicians such as Audrey Assad and The Many to write music that stands outside the framework that is now inherent in white American evangelicalism. Churches should give their contemporary worship musicians the time and, if possible, the resources to write and record CWM that better reflects their understanding of who God is and who God has called us to be. More musicians need to come together to write music that stands in contrast and even challenges the CWM that helps to reinforce militant masculinity and Christian nationalism. By joining in this creative work, we can help dismantle the violent patriarchal systems that are at work in American families, politics, and society at large. As Kobes Du Mez encourages at the end of her book, "What was once done might also be undone."[32]

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Music as a Liturgical Soundscape

Ike Sturm and Debbie Bronkema

Author's note: I (Ike) served as the music director for the Jazz Ministry at Saint Peter's Church in New York City for the last seventeen years, writing music and engaging musicians for our weekly Jazz Vespers services. We worked to cultivate a spiritual home for jazz musicians and their families for over fifty years. After being asked to write this article, I entered into an exciting transition, resigning from Saint Peter's to pursue creative endeavors that have been building for me in recent years. One exciting place that has been growing is my residency with the digital ministry called connect.faith, which was born out of Pleasantville (New York) Presbyterian Church. We've been hosting a wonderful fellowship on Zoom during the pandemic called Creativity Lab with Pastor Debbie Bronkema. New liturgical settings and sacred songs can be seen and heard at connect.faith and ikesturm.com. The following is an edited conversation between Pastor Debbie and myself about music as a liturgical soundscape in worship.

Pastor Debbie: How did you envision music and liturgy connecting in your role at Saint Peter's?

Ike: There's an intersection in music where we listen to God, to each other, and to the voices within us. This practice of listening informs much of the music that we make and serves as a unique spiritual practice. Though people have historically seen jazz as something that doesn't belong in church, I find it to be a beautiful expression of God's moving and nourishing Spirit.

I grew up in an artistic home with a jazz musician father. Through my dad's example, I could sense an intrinsic connective and communal thread in music and the way it touched our lives. Jazz visionaries like Dizzy Gillespie, Clark Terry, Dianne Reeves, and Bobby McFerrin collaborated with my dad and sometimes came to our house for dinner. Hearing their stories and music immersed me in a world that formed the spiritual center of my life.

As each season passes, I gain new insights into the lessons learned through this cathartic music. It's defined by focused intention, flexibility, grace, forgiveness, and the informal dialogue of call and response. Even though the jazz community is often marginalized, I've found it to be one of the most generous and caring communities I've ever known. I'm reminded of Jesus' care for those around him when I witness my friends serving others. My guitarist often passes on an opportunity to solo, smiling at me and saying, "You play; it's your turn." When we invite our worshiping community into this way of being, everyone belongs. Communal improvisation offers us a readied canvas that welcomes us into a powerful, spirit-filled place.

Pastor Debbie: I love the idea that music is a way of experiencing the liturgy. In these moments you're experiencing Assurance of Pardon and you're experiencing what it means to say, "It's not my turn right now; it's somebody else's turn." The humility that goes along with this conception of peace is beautiful.

I think a lot of people think of jazz being completely improvised, but I've learned that there's also composition behind it. Could you talk a little bit about how the jazz composer and their improvisation fit together?

Ike: As church music directors and as jazz musicians, we put a lot of thought into musical aesthetic, structure, and form. After our plans have been made,

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however, we are called to be agile and attuned leaders in the moment as we listen and adapt. Jazz gives us a model for how to bend our prayers and language, adapting as necessary to unexpected joyous or painful events. Jesus constantly broke from tradition to minister to those around him in need. I think these ideas relate. We may think that jazz is completely free-form, and sometimes it can be, but what informs it is a lifetime of experience guiding the choices we make. Visionary saxophonist Charlie Parker once said, "Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn. They teach you that music has boundaries. But, man, there's no boundary line to art."

The two of us are improvising even as we speak to one another. You've prepared questions in advance, but now our conversation is rooted in this moment and will rely on our intellect, our environment, the feeling of the day, and everything that touches it. I compose settings as a type of road map, where the chords and melody are articulated within a flexible context. The chords are notations or suggestions of a particular sonority that can still be realized in a personal voice, one which only the individual performer can offer through their own style. It's different every single time, even within the same ensemble. If we play something completely preordained, we may lose the ability to listen and respond faithfully to the conversation at hand. When we risk sharing our true selves, we model a vulnerable way of being. A chemical reaction happens in this spiritual domain and it's often here that I am changed.

How can we find ways to remain in this attuned mindset? Our band discovered that we could push ourselves deeper musically in the Psalms. I remember one day I had misplaced a setting I'd written. We had been playing psalms every week for many years, developing our communication and musical radar much like a seasoned chamber group. We decided to challenge ourselves, striving to create something new in that moment. I looked at our singers, vibraphonist, and guitarist and said, "What if we just played the music that comes into our heads and hearts?" No key, tempo, melody or harmony was there to guide us, but we did have years of practice communicating in other contexts. A few friends had that anxious "deer in the headlights" look, but we pushed on in faith. Though my band teases me about it now, it truly was a natural step after improvising together for years outside the church. What happened was incredibly moving. We found that, with proper experience and a trusting, nurturing environment, people knew what to do when the moment arrived. What a powerful message we share when we give people permission to be who they are right now. We're able to live into who we were called to be and have permission to experience that the Spirit that is in us is good. Our musicians have developed this in a deep and artful way, encouraging our jazz choir and entire assembly to be a part of the impromptu fabric. I've heard countless stories of healing and connection over the years and sometimes all it requires is letting go, listening, and playing that first note. As we reflect especially on this past season of isolation, this family-like connection has proven critical to us all.

In recent years we have improvised our psalm setting nearly every week. Though I create my other written compositions with my whole heart, I'm often struck by how these unplanned windows of the liturgy are some of the most inspired moments.

In recent years we have improvised our psalm setting nearly every week. Though I create my other written compositions with my whole heart, I'm often struck by how these unplanned windows of the liturgy are some of the most inspired moments. The levity we experienced in worship often coincided with the times of greatest vulnerability. When we let go, we listen to the Spirit and to each other, singing and even creating songs in community. Every single person is a critical part of the whole. We improvise a refrain that lives within the text. In the articulation of the psalm, there's a phrase that resonates with the news around us, the loved one who died the day before, the child's baptism, or the looming event of the next day. All the experiences and emotions in the air find their way into the refrain.

I recall a particular day when my daughter was three years old. With the help of our wonderful song leaders, we collectively discovered the joyous impromptu refrain of "Be glad." It was not written down or planned in any way beyond the psalm text,

but the whole congregation joined voices for the unison melody as if we had rehearsed it. Just as it got completely quiet, my child sang out the refrain in the whole church. It was spontaneous and hilarious. We all laughed together in one big, uplifting breath. It was pure celebration as we shared a connection with God and with one another.

Pastor Debbie: I can see the scene. I can imagine everyone's trust with each other to be vulnerable in that space, and that's such a gift to give to people, because we're all behind our own walls. For the music to be able to bring us outside those walls or through those walls is a powerful thing.

Now you've moved into working with connect.faith, which is a new worshiping community of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Our mission is to be a space where creativity, spirituality, and justice meet.

Now you've moved into working with connect.faith, which is a new worshiping community of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Our mission is to be a space where creativity, spirituality, and justice meet. Our community is not bound by location, which often means that we meet online. How do you see these kinds of experiences feeding into what you do virtually? What's different, what's the opportunity, what's the challenge of creating music in this online kind of environment?

Ike: Our beautiful jazz choir has met every week through the pandemic. It's a fellowship group, a community, an educational group, and a family of friends. After this season, we are more vibrant and connected than I ever thought possible. What moves and surprises me is the intimacy of the group in a digital context where we are not present physically with one another. Of course, there's something special about being together when you can sense nuances and vibrations in the physical space. However, we're able to welcome a wonderfully diverse group from ages twenty-two to ninety-one, from many different states and even other countries. Finding passion, belonging, expression, and inspiration in music has united us. We listen to African American music, jazz, gospel, blues, roots and talk about how it all relates to those who grew up in that context. We explore social justice in conversation and in song, taking turns on Zoom while people challenge and comfort each other. We begin by asking about people's lives and pets and family and health. Then we pray about those things.

This group has been an incredible source of healing to me as people continually show up in every sense. I notice and give thanks for these very real spiritual connections that were birthed in a digital context. I'm struck by how much I needed this group personally, but also how God has used my own need to bring about healing for others as well.

Pastor Debbie: I think music is uniquely suited to meet people where they are, bringing them out of things that are holding them apart and revealing ways to connect. Music as a way to connect with the Spirit and bring liturgy to life is really powerful. When you're writing music for a worship experience, where does it start for you? What does it feel like?

Ike: I think that's often where I find God. Sometimes I find that connection outdoors in the wilderness, and sometimes I find it internally in a kind of prayerful or meditative place, but I think it's this intersection where the authentic parts of myself are given permission to be engaged in the process.

I played bass on a cruise ship that sailed around the world when I was nineteen. It was a summer of extremes, visiting the Holy Land, the Pyramids of Giza, the Arctic Circle, and everything in between. I wrote a piece called "Spirit" that became my first album, a programmatic work meditating on aspects of the Holy Spirit. I'd spend time on the water every day, mesmerized by the sea's texture and the incredible beauty of creation. But I felt incredibly isolated. It was a deep time of introspection and a desire to "dig in" spiritually and discover the sacred in a way that felt authentic to me and not something that I accepted from someone else. I prayed every day that a sense of God would be communicated through my music. There's something about being in the wilderness and allowing a little bit of time and space for the Spirit to emerge through our internal voice. Listening inwardly for that intimate dialogue in the context of music seems like a sacred practice to me, and I feel like it's what we're being called to do, whether writing music, feeding the hungry, or helping the child in our midst. Music

grants me access to a form of healing as voices, string instruments, and cymbals reach my senses and heart. I find the process of writing any music, regardless of its genre or context, is sacred because that's where I feel the presence of God.

Pastor Debbie: It sounds like one of the things that brings you joy is when you're letting God speak through you into music. Is it hard to make space for that in a life that, like many others, pulls us toward many different directions and responsibilities at once? How could you help someone else think about making that kind of space?

Ike: There are many days that go by without me playing or writing any music because of the responsibilities in my life. But if I let go of my therapeutic process of listening and writing for too many days in a row, some critical part of me withers. It's the living playground where I can express myself fully, and it's one of the reasons music is so important to me. In my youth, church was a place where some of my deepest emotions were welcome. When I was struggling to belong in middle school, I read stories of inclusion and healing for the brokenhearted and dreamt of becoming a pastor. As an adult, I've been embraced by God through our life-giving community and artistic freedom. Creating with others is one of the most joyful things in my life because there's no barrier between my emotions and what I can express musically. I'm allowed just as I am into the space, and that is deeply healing for me and I believe for others as well.

Pastor Debbie: I love how you're lifting up the idea that the songs are alive with emotion and feeling. Often, we treat the Bible like a two-thousand-year-old document that doesn't reflect where or who we are. And the truth is that those words are still speaking to us and reminding us who and whose we are. The words find resonance with us through the music in a place where people feel safe and free to express themselves. It's the music that tells me that I'm grieving, connecting me to different times and places when something painful happened. It's a way of unlocking us.

I'm thinking about a setting you wrote of the Song of Simeon and the ways in which the words and the music intersect. Can you tell us how you envisioned that piece?

Ike: I've loved that text ever since I was a kid. To me, it feels like the story and feeling holds the key to everything we need as musicians—the imagery, the sound, the aesthetic, the tone, the melody, harmony, and rhythm. I love working with poignant texts that touch us emotionally from the moment we encounter them. A childlike process of wondering, listening, and playing with this material reminds us of who we are as children of God. I read and sing the text over and over, until it feels like something I can absorb in my body and senses. I discover a simple line or ostinato that mystically holds what the text is communicating on an abstract level. I love to sing while I'm playing the bass, testing out harmonic relationships and melodies as I wait for something to lay down roots. I feel an internal resonance when a sound lands on fertile ground. I "find" music as a composer, understanding that anything that passes through me is a gift and not something to be owned.

My daughter and I have been walking along the Hudson River recently looking for interesting stones. I'm noticing a connection to the process of sifting through chords and melodies until I discover something that sparks interest within my core. As brief visitors on our incredible planet, we gather stones together and give thanks for the gifts we receive.

Pastor Debbie: What music might you envision for particular parts of the liturgy? For example, the Call to Worship is something that feels like you're inviting people in, and the Confession is perhaps more intimate and personal, even though we do it corporately.

Ike: We might ask, "Where do the words touch us? And how does music help us access the vulnerable piece of who we are?" I think by experiencing liturgy all through your life there are elements that become absorbed into the fabric of your being. Our Song of Simeon setting strives to access emotions that were already indelibly etched into the piece. A friend and pastor shared the feelings the piece communicated to him when he heard it, citing Simeon's faith and mood: "Wistful, soulful, expectant, sadly resolved." I was touched to realize the music had struck a chord for someone else, but also that a deep part of myself was being affirmed. When we're creating from our subconscious, our spiritual intentions are being exchanged with others in a place beyond words.

Even when you don't talk about it, someone else can experience the same abstract emotion from a piece of music. Filled with melancholy, grief, peace, and joy, Simeon's song reflects the way in which our lives hold countless emotions simultaneously. Our experiences as human beings are mirrored within music, opening a window where we can intuitively receive the intentions of others and dig deeper within ourselves. Sometimes it's daunting to enter into music that feels so transparent and transportive, but risks yield an incredible reward of connection and healing.

Pastor Debbie: Are there any other settings or pieces you'd like to share with us?

Ike: I've always loved Psalm 23—it's an example of a setting that allows the players to breathe life into it in a collaborative way. The text guided me in every move of the written setting, as well as where to go when our improvisation and imaginations engaged with the moment. That's one of the gifts of putting familiar songs or familiar words to music as you get to hear it in a new way. This piece is an example of one that includes clearly written material for the players, but then offers a middle section that is almost completely free for us to explore where the text moves us.

"Renew" is based on Psalm 104 and is a call to "renew the face of the earth." For the video, I captured film footage during a hike I took with my family, incorporating light shining through the trees. In an age of sensory overload, I'm curious about what we can do as artists to make space for contemplation and renewal. I am drawn to the way this psalmist calls us to be good stewards of the earth and offers the natural world as a place we might find peace for our souls.

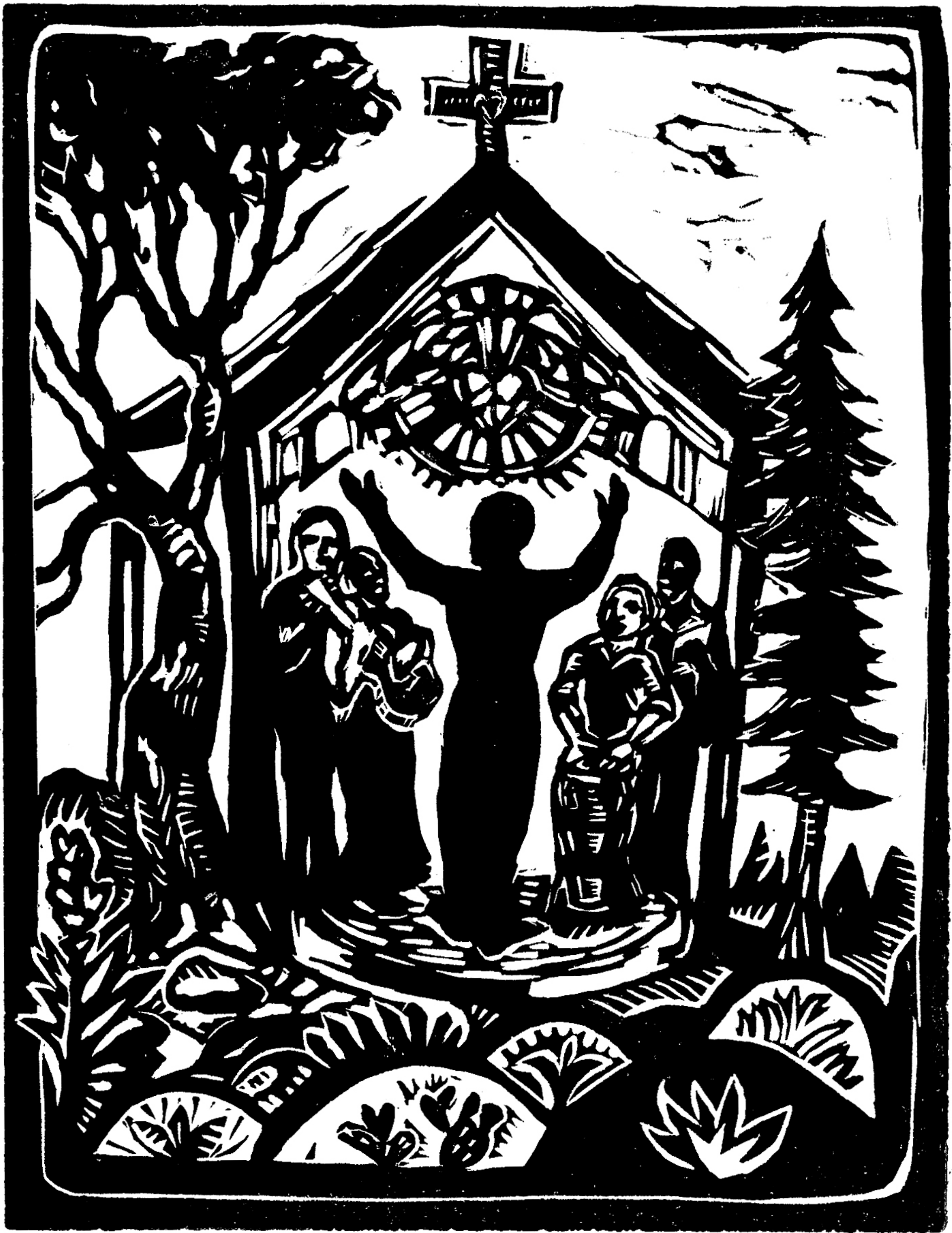
Our arrangement of the beloved spiritual "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me" was sung by jazz and blues legend Catherine Russell. Her father was Louis Armstrong's music director, and her mother was a gifted bassist and singer who performed with Mary Lou Williams. Her love of God and unbelievable musicianship is a lesson to me each time we get to play with one another. She reminds me that our faith and intention resonate in every note we sing and play. The song expresses struggle, desire, pain, and grace as we walk on our Lenten journey. I searched for a new reharmonization and rhythmic feel that attempts to honor and respect the deep meaning of the song.

Songs conjure up particular seasons for each of us. Something in Advent may have a more patient, reflective character than a setting for Pentecost, for example. How do the feelings and meanings of the seasons inform the melodic and timbral choices we make? This dynamic, transient environment is a thrilling space to inhabit in worship. The passing of church seasons helps us experience a progression over the course of our lives.

Pastor Debbie: As you look toward future projects, what are you imagining?

Ike: I'm working on a new album and three new commissions for the Rochester Symphony Orchestra, Notre Dame Folk Choir, and Montview Presbyterian Church in Denver. I'm thrilled about the potential of working collaboratively in a digital format with different churches. Connect.faith and Montview will be partners in a new commission as we seek ways to amplify creative and diverse voices. There's a world of potential as we bring together like-minded communities beyond church walls and geographic divides.

Loving those around us through music and listening gives us a glimpse of the future God has in store for us. The art of liturgical song is rooted in the way we live our lives, and it might just help us find our voice and footing along the journey.



Kelly Rider

Music for Organ by African American Composers

Charles D. Frost

A few years ago I was invited to perform an organ recital at Christ Episcopal Church in Las Vegas, Nevada. The request was for me to perform an entire program of organ music written by African American composers. The program was part of a series of programs, lectures, and worship services that would be held throughout the year in recognition of the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King Jr. At the time I was familiar with a limited number of organ works in this category. After carefully putting together a program that would meet this request, performing the recital, and receiving positive feedback from the audience, I decided to put together programs like this for future recitals. I began researching and learning new music by African American composers and since then have performed a number of recitals featuring this music.

In this article, I will share some of what I have learned about organ music by African American composers. If you are an organist, I hope you will be inspired to learn some of this very fine repertoire and include it in worship services and recitals. Whether you are an active church organist, recitalist, teacher, student, scholar, or casual listener to music, I want to increase your appreciation for organ music composed by African American composers. I also hope that colleges and universities will include these composers in their organ studios as well as organ classes and workshops. Local AGO (American Guild of Organists) guilds will find this a topic worthy of exploring in the programs and workshops they sponsor.

To understand why organ music by African American composers has not been a regular part of the repertoire for organists, we must first understand some of the history of the treatment of African Americans and how this affected the use of their music. Throughout the early part of the twentieth century, African Americans were treated as secondary citizens at best. Segregation was a way of life. Certainly, the aftermath of slavery had a great influence on people in America. Jim Crow laws contributed to the suppression of Blacks, who were not allowed to participate in society the same way as whites. There was the perception that Blacks were not intelligent enough to comprehend and understand how good classical works were composed. Furthermore, women were not deemed equal to men. Racism played a major role in keeping organ compositions by African Americans from becoming part of organists' repertoire. Without knowledge of this music, there was not a market for it or a demand from organists or publishers. Eventually, African Americans began attending colleges and universities and became well educated. They attended many of the same fine music schools and universities as white students and in many cases graduated with honors. They were able to successfully overcome many of the stereotypes and negative perceptions about Blacks.

Over many decades, colleges and universities were established specifically for African Americans. Black scholars found it difficult to secure positions in predominantly white institutions and therefore obtained employment in Black schools and universities. Although Blacks were composing music, they found it difficult to get it published. Much of it remained in manuscript form and often was discovered by a friend or relative after the death of the composer.

Once Blacks began to be recognized for their achievements, the idea emerged of showcasing them during a certain time of the year. In the 1920s the second week of February was established as

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Negro History Week. This week coincided with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Communities and schools presented lectures and performances. In the 1960s, Negro History Week evolved into Black History Month, aided in part by the civil rights movement. To this day there are people who think it is appropriate to recognize achievements by Blacks, or present Black-related programs, only in February. When I was minister of music at a Presbyterian church in Beaufort, South Carolina, our adult choir established a relationship with a choir from a local Black congregation. We gave a Fellowship Concert together annually that was extremely well received by the entire Beaufort community. People often told me that they thought February would be the perfect time for our concerts because it was Black History Month. I received the same reaction when I started performing my recitals of organ music by African American composers. Relegating the recognition of achievements by Blacks to one month, however, limits exposure. We do not do this for other races. Obviously, I never supported or promoted this school of thought.

Organ music written by African Americans has been affected by many of the circumstances I have written about in this article. However, after decades of neglect, publishers began to recognize the high quality of music being written by Black composers at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It is sad that so many of the composers and pioneers in this area did not live long enough to see their work in print. MorningStar Publishers is to be congratulated for taking the lead in publishing African American organ music. GIA is a notable publisher that has promoted African American Organ music. James Abbington and Mickey Thomas Terry worked closely with GIA and MorningStar Publishers to get this music published. Other publishers have also begun publishing organ music by African Americans.

Mickey Thomas Terry is one of the leading ambassadors on this topic. He began researching music and performing it in the 1970s and '80s. He later collaborated with MorningStar Publishers to produce the series *African-American Organ Music Anthology*. The first of this nine-volume series was produced in 2000; volume 9 was published in early 2021. Included is music appropriate for both worship services and recitals. The music in this anthology reflects the influence of the Negro spiritual, plainchant, African tribal tunes, Protestant hymns, German chorales, and original themes. Specific selections and composers will be discussed later in this article.

James Abbington compiled and edited the series *King of Kings, Organ Music of Black Composers, Past and Present*, which consists of three volumes. As I write this article, the fourth volume is being compiled. A large number of the works are based on hymns and Negro spirituals. There are, however, a number of pieces written in styles that have original themes.

Both the Terry collection and Abbington volumes contain music appropriate for worship and recitals. The composers represented are mostly male, as few African American women have published organ music. As I have stated, women were not treated as equals to men. Fortunately, this has changed in the music world in recent years.

I will now share some of the music composed by African Americans. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list, only a sampling. I have listed composers who are mostly found in collections. It is my hope that you will be led to research them on your own.

The pieces listed are appropriate for worship and can also be used in recital.

African-American Organ Music Anthology

Mickey Thomas Terry, editor
MorningStar Music Publishers

Volume 1

This volume contains several selections appropriate for recitals. Some of the selections are appropriate for preludes, offertories, and postludes. Music by Thomas H. Kerr, Eugene W. Hancock, Betty Jackson King, Mark Fax, and William B. Cooper is included.

Volume 2

Undine Smith Moore's arrangement on NETTLETON is a good introduction to the hymn "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing." Other composers contained in this volume include Thomas H. Kerr, William B. Cooper, and Robert A. Harris.

Volume 3

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain," Eugene W. Hancock
"O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee," Noel Da Costa
"Meditation on 'Were You There,'" Evelyn Simpson-Curenton

Volume 4
Composers: David Hurd, Ruth Norman, Mark Fax

Volume 5
"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," Evelyn Simpson-Curenton
"Let Us Break Bread Together," J. Roland Braithwaite
"Spiritual: Round about the Mountain," Noel Da Costa
Other composers: Thomas H. Kerr, William B. Cooper

Volume 6
"Partita on Detroit," David Hurd
"Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier," George Walker
Other composers: Ruth Norman, Mark Fax, Thomas H. Kerr

Volume 7
"Chorale Prelude on 'St. Anne,'" Mark Fax
"Chorale Prelude on 'Wer nur den lieben Gott lasst walten,'" Mark Fax
"Fantasy on 'Brother James' Air,'" Adolphus Hailstork
Other composer: Charles D. Coleman

Volume 8
Composers: Ulysses Kay, Noel Da Costa, William B. Cooper, Trent Johnson, Jeffrey Mumford

Volume 9
Composers: George Walker, Mark A. Miller, David Hurd, Undine Smith Moore

King of Kings
James Abbington, Editor
GIA Publications, Inc.

Volume 1
Spirituals and Hymns
"King of Kings," Ralph Simpson
"A Little More Faith in Jesus," John W. Work III
"Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross," D. L.White
"Lord, Build Me a Cabin in Glory Land," Uzee Brown Jr.
"Were You There," Uzee Brown Jr.
"Talk about a Child That Do Love Jesus," Calvin Taylor
"Go Down, Moses," arr. W. C. Handy, adapt. Walter C. Simon

Other Selections
"Triumphal March of Heritage," Uzee Brown Jr.
"Retrospection," Florence B. Price
"Offertory," H. Leslie Adams
"Arietta," Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
"Melody," Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
"Elegy," Samuel Coleridge-Taylor

Volume 2
This volume contains a diversity of styles of music that are appropriate for worship and recital.

Music for Worship
"Prayer," George Walker
"Adoration," Florence Price
"Wade in Duh Wadduh," William Farley Smith
"Give Me Jesus," Marques L. A. Garrett
"Go Down, Moses," Fela Sowande
"Joshua Fit de Battle ob Jericho," Fela Sowande

Other Selections
"Fanfare and Chorale," Calvin Fuller
"A Pleasant Thought," Florence B. Price
"In Quiet Mood," Florence B. Price
"Impromptu," Samuel Coleridge-Taylor
"Yoruba Lament," Fela Sowande

Volume 3
Music for Worship
"Prelude on I Am Thine, O Lord," Monte Adams
"Bread of Heaven," William B. Cooper
"His Eye Is on the Sparrow," Carl Haywood
"Postlude on Go, Tell It on the Mountain," Norah Duncan IV

Other Selections
"Toccata on Good News," Carl MaultsBy
"Jubilate," Fela Sowande
"Variations on a Theme by Ellie," Trevor Weston
"Churchyard Chatter," Uzbek Brown Jr.
"Fantasy on Walk Together, Children," Andre J. Thomas

Listen to the Lambs
Adolphus Hailstork
Concordia Publishing House
This is a collection of arrangements of spirituals that can be used in worship and recital.

"Amazing Grace"
"Everytime I Feel the Spirit"

“Go Down, Moses”
“Kum Ba Yah”
“Listen to the Lambs”
“Lord, I Don’t Feel Noways Tired”
“Oh, Come, Oh, Come, Emmanuel”
“Oh, Freedom”
“Ride On, Ride On, in Majesty”
“There Is a Balm in Gilead”
“Wade in the Water”

The Organ Music of Phillip Barnette McIntyre

Wayne Leopoldo Editions

“Credo Suite” (Conception and Birth; Trial and Death; Resurrection [Trumpetings])
“Good Christian Men, Rejoice”
“Nine Hymns for Organ”
“Passion Suite” (Sorrows; Tears; Release)
“Reflections”
“Heaven Bound: Suite for Cello and Organ”

Mark Miller

GIA Publications

“Variations on Engelberg”
“Lift Every Voice,” also found in Volume 9 of the Terry collection

Carl Haywood

GIA Publications

“We Shall Overcome”

Biographies: A Selected List

David Hurd (b. 1950)
David Hurd was born in Brooklyn, New York. He is a graduate of Oberlin College Conservatory with continued music studies at the University of North Carolina. He was professor of church music and director of chapel music at the General Theological Seminary in New York. He has served as organist in many churches. He is a composer of sacred choral music as well as music for the organ.

Undine Smith Moore (1904–1989)
Undine Smith Moore was born in Jarrett, Virginia. She is a graduate of Fisk University and received a master of music degree at Columbia University. She also studied at the Juilliard School of Music, the Eastman School, and the Manhattan School of Music. She served on the music faculty of Virginia State University in Petersburg, Virginia. Her musical output includes music for organ, piano, voice, flute, chamber music, and choral compositions.

George Walker (1922–2018)
George Walker was a native of Washington, DC. He attended the Oberlin Conservatory and later studied with Rudolf Serkin at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he became the first Black to receive the artist diploma in 1945. He also studied at the American Conservatory in Fontainebleau, where he was a student of Nadia Boulanger and Robert Casadesus. He became the first Black soloist to perform with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra. In 1956 he became the first Black to receive a doctorate of musical arts (piano) from the Eastman School of Music. Later he served as head of the music department at Rutgers University. His writings include music for organ, piano, voice, chorus, chamber ensemble, and orchestra.

William B. Cooper (1920–1993)
William B. Cooper was a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He received his bachelor of music and master of music degrees from the Philadelphia College of Performing Arts and a doctorate of music from Columbia Pacific University, California. In 1988 he was awarded a doctorate of sacred music from Christ Theological Seminary in Yonkers, New York. He served on music faculties at Bennett College, Greensboro, North Carolina, and Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia. He served as minister of music at St. Philip’s Episcopal Church and St. Martin’s Episcopal Church in Harlem. His musical output includes works for organ, voice, chorus, and orchestra.

Mark Fax (1911–1974)
Mark Fax was a native of Baltimore, Maryland. He received a bachelor of music degree in piano from Syracuse University. Later he received a master of music degree in composition from the Eastman School of Music. Fax joined the faculty at Howard University, where he served as professor of composition. He later was assistant to the dean of fine arts before becoming director of the School of Music. He served as organist at the Asbury United Methodist Church in Washington, DC. His compositions include works for piano, chorus, chamber ensemble, orchestra, and opera.

Eugene W. Hancock (1929–1994)
Eugene W. Hancock was a native of Detroit, Michigan. He received a bachelor of music degree from the University of Detroit, a master of music degree from the University of Michigan, and a doctor of sacred music degree from the School of Sacred Music at Union Theological Seminary in New York. His performances were known for performing and promoting the works of African American composers. His compositions include works for organ, voice, chamber ensemble, and chorus.

Thomas H. Kerr (1915–1988)
Thomas H. Kerr was a native of Baltimore, Maryland. He served on the music faculty of Howard University as professor of piano. He was a graduate of the Eastman School of Music. He was known mainly as a pianist. He served as organist at the Plymouth Congregational Church in Washington, DC.

Betty Jackson King (1928–1994)
Betty Jackson King was a native of Chicago, Illinois. She received bachelor of music and master of music degrees from Roosevelt University. Additional studies were done at the Peabody Conservatory and Westminster Choir College. She served on the faculties of several institutions as well as the public school system of Wildwood, New Jersey. She wrote for organ, voice, chorus, piano, and cello.

Evelyn Simpson-Curenton (b. 1953)
Evelyn Simpson-Curenton was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As a young child she accompanied her family, the Singing Simpsons of Philadelphia, in their performances. She is a graduate of Temple University in Philadelphia, where she received a bachelor of music degree in music education and voice. She is well known as a composer, arranger, choral director, lecturer, and accompanist.

Adolphus Hailstork (b. 1941)
Adolphus Hailstork was born in Rochester, New York. He received a doctorate in music with an emphasis in composition from Michigan State University. He also studied at the American Conservatory at Fontainebleau with Nadia Boulanger and at Howard University under Mark Fax. Hailstork has written for chorus, voice, various chamber ensembles, and band.

Ulysses Kay (1917–1995)
Ulysses Kay was born in Tucson, Arizona. He received a bachelor of music degree from the University of Arizona. He also studied with Howard Hanson at the Eastman School of Music and Paul Hindemith at Yale and the Berkshire Music Center. He served as visiting professor at Boston University and the University of Los Angeles (UCLA). He served as professor of music at Herbert H. Lehman College (CUNY). While there, he received several distinguished awards. He wrote for organ, opera, orchestra, chorus, ballet, chamber ensemble, and piano.

Ruth Norman (1927–2007)
Ruth N. Norman is a native of Omaha, Nebraska. She earned a bachelor of music degree at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and a master of music degree in piano at the Eastman School of Music. She toured extensively performing piano recitals of music by Black classical composers. Norman has written several works for chamber ensemble, chorus, piano, and organ. Her later works reflected the influence of mysticism and eastern philosophy.

Florence Price (1887–1953)
Florence Price was born in Little Rock, Arkansas. She studied at the New England Conservatory of Music, the American Conservatory of Music, and the University of Chicago. She was a composer, pianist, organist, and music teacher. She was the first Black woman composer to have a symphony performed by a major symphony orchestra, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. It was the premiere performance of Symphony in E Minor.

There are many more African American composers who have written for the organ. While I cannot provide here an exhaustive list of them or their works, I offer an introduction to a topic that has been overlooked for many decades. It is my hope that this article will inspire you to perform much of this music in recital. I also hope that more of this music will be discovered in organ studios at colleges and universities. As you see, there is a plethora of music appropriate for worship. Let us recognize the gifts of all people and promote their music. Not only will you benefit as a musician, but your audiences and congregations will be richer for the exposure.

Practical Wisdom for New Organists

Nicole Keller

A pianist walks into a church and sits down to worship. A few months later, that pianist is leading worship services from the organ.

This is such a common story. Someone's life change—an illness, retirement, or career change—has become an opportunity for someone else, though at first it may not seem so. The organ is a daunting instrument with many buttons, lights, and pedals. The labels on the console are not always in English, and sometimes those that are give no clue as to what sound might emerge. How are pianists to familiarize themselves with the instrument and find a workable level of comfort to lead worship services effectively? It is quite possible that while pondering these questions, this new opportunity may seem more like an inescapable burden. In fact, this opportunity is a wonderful chance for new discoveries, challenges, and joys.

In more than twenty-five years of teaching I have encountered many types of students—the self-motivated, shy, or eager; those with great talent but little interest in practice; and those who loved to practice yet struggled with the most basic of skills. In all these categories, there were students who excelled and those who did not. The difference always lay in their commitment to a practice regimen flexible enough to grow and change as they did. This regimen was usually developed over a period of time with much trial and error, and sometimes a few tears in between triumphs. There are no shortcuts to playing the organ well. There are no "life hacks" that will make the process simpler. The path to success and comfort at the console lies in a willingness to learn, examining oneself, and becoming educated about the instrument.

Think back to your beginning piano lessons. Most of us cannot remember what it was like to learn those first simple songs, usually beginning somewhere near middle C (with both thumbs) and ending back where it began. I have a few very foggy memories of sitting at an enormous grand piano at the conservatory where I took lessons as a child, following the directions of a very kind teacher whom I grew to love. The experience was exciting and full of inspiration as I sat in a beautiful mansion decorated like an art museum with incredible music wafting through every hallway like the smell of a delicious cake baking in the oven, inviting me to enjoy. I felt special, as if I were being inducted into a wonderful new society where I would always be surrounded with beauty. After every lesson, I left with new music to play and new worlds to explore. At first I practiced at home with the help of my mother, and it was a treasured time together. Every week carried a sense of expectation and a secret jubilation that I was somehow pleasing my parents in a way that my siblings could not—a triumph of sibling rivalry at its best. Consider your first piano memories for a few moments. Perhaps they were full of fun and adventure or perhaps you were that kid who had to be dragged into the lesson every week. Hopefully, there were more happy moments than not! Now skip ahead to your first organ experience. Were you properly "introduced" to the instrument as a vehicle for adventure and expression? Or was it thrust into your hands with hot pressure and expectation instead of feelings of sensorial bliss and inner triumph? It is that first meeting that often shapes our future approach and expectations. The little girl in the conservatory saw nothing but wonder and possibility. The

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pianist expected to wrangle an intimidating, multi-keyboard and pedal instrument into beautiful sound without so much as an instruction manual will likely see something a little different. An important part of effective practice is to find ways to build joy into a process that requires a great amount of diligence and discipline.

> Our relationship with our instrument is like any other; it requires care, thoughtfulness, and a dedication to quality time spent together.

Our relationship with our instrument is like any other; it requires care, thoughtfulness, and a dedication to quality time spent together. If I only devote a few rushed hours a week with a person, I should not expect a comfortable rapport and a deep connection. The same concept applies to our instruments. The more thoughtful and meaningful your practice time is, the more you will receive from it in return. Find something about both the practicing and performing process that you love and look forward to—the time to yourself, the intellectual challenge, the joy of making music with others. Your mindset during practice and performance is just as important, if not more so, than the number of hours you spend at the instrument.

Our relationship to the instrument begins with how we approach it. Consider how you approach the piano. What are the first things you unconsciously do when you sit down? When I sit on the bench, I am immediately aware of my position in respect to the instrument. I adjust the bench. I consider my horizontal position to the keyboard. I adjust the bench. I blindly find the damper pedal—after thirty-five years of reaching for that curved piece of metal, my right foot knows exactly where to find it. I adjust the bench. Note how many adjustments I make before I play a note! This may seem like a lengthy period of preparation, but it happens within just a few seconds because it is automatic. Years of experience and an occasional misadventure have taught me how to prepare to play. Now consider how you approach the organ. I sit at the bench and am immediately aware of my position in respect to the pedals. Do my feet reach the pedals with ease? Am I too high or too low? I adjust the bench. I reach for the top manual to determine whether the reach is comfortable. I adjust the bench. I reach for the Great manual (whether on the bottom or in the middle) and consider how close it is to my body. I adjust the bench. This, again, happens within just a few seconds but is a step I never skip. It is important that I am well-positioned to move and pivot in any direction necessary while keeping my center mass in balance, always retaining the ability to return to my default position. Only then can I achieve any technical difficulty with as much ease as possible. If you are new to the organ, you do not have those years of experience to guide you. But if you use your experience as a pianist to guide you and adapt to the additional tasks at the organ, you can begin to create a reliable routine for yourself.

> Now consider your relationship with yourself—in particular, how familiar you are with your mental learning process and your motivation. Are you a disciplined person, or someone who is more inspired in the moment?

Now consider your relationship with yourself—in particular, how familiar you are with your mental learning process and your motivation. Are you a disciplined person, or someone who is more inspired in the moment? (Note that I compared "disciplined" to "in the moment," as opposed to using a word such as lazy. It is important to keep your language and mindset positive when in self-reflection.) Are you task-oriented or do you prefer to work with a particular process in mind? What's the difference? I am a mix of both. I work best when I have a particular deadline and, in many cases, I am juggling several deadlines at once. I like to examine my calendar, count backwards from a deadline, and assign particular tasks to complete for each week before the deadline. When asked to write an article like this one, my first task is to add the deadline to my calendar. My second task is to set a reminder one month before the due date—I call this an interior deadline. I also add it to a running list of to-dos for larger projects on my desk, where I will see it almost every day. For my next task, I open a document in my word processing program and begin to jot down ideas as they come. I may also do this on a notepad. When the one month notification occurs,

I begin to cull ideas and formulate the structure of the article. Sometimes, I have already begun the "long write," which is what I call the evolution of ideas into coherent thoughts and sentences. By one week before the deadline, I should be in the edit phase. I will confess that this does not always work. Sometimes I do not work as efficiently as I should. Sometimes life intervenes and I cannot stick to my interior deadlines. Sometimes I must admit that I am just one human being and cannot achieve all that I wish to at a given moment. When these moments arise, I work hard to forgive myself and relax in the knowledge that I have created a flexible system. The interior deadlines I set are always flexible to within a week or so, giving myself built-in time to stay on track. I have a similar process with music. When asked to play a concert—especially one that includes music that is new to me—my first task is to add the date to my calendar. After choosing and examining the music, I count backwards from the concert at least two weeks. This is when I want the music to be thoroughly learned so that it has time to settle and gel together in my mind and body. From that mark, I assign certain sections of music to each week so that there is a learning plan for practice sessions. If I am enjoying a period of consistent practice, I can be flexible with this step, but I know that it is available for when open times for practice is scarce. It is a proven technique for me that I can trust in its success. The process of writing out my program week by week also allows me to keep the totality of the concert in my head. I find that my most anxious moments about any significant undertaking are when the project looms so large over the horizon that I cannot envision its entirety. If I am not comfortable with all the music by the two-week interior deadline, I still have a little wiggle room to set a few more deadlines.

Did you notice where my task-oriented strategy turned into a process? By assigning tasks to myself, I created a process where I can gage my learning progress and make adjustments as necessary. I create a process of reasonable expectations for myself as I approach a deadline. By choosing specific tasks for each week, I relieve myself of the stress of trying to determine what I should practice during any given week. I also allow myself to step outside of the process and learn in a nonregimented way, always with the option of stepping back into the process. I have tested and honed this method over a period of several years and have finally reached a point where I no longer question its efficacy or efficiency. That confidence is key to my ability to find joy in the music-making, no matter how difficult the music. Perhaps this is too much process for you, or too many tasks. You must examine yourself and determine what works for you. Consider your nonmusical life to assist you with this process. Is there a favorite hobby or activity that has a positive impact on your life you might examine for similar strategies—task or process—to achieve your musical goals? If you meditate in the morning because it is when your mind is the most quiet and focused, perhaps that is also the best time to practice. If you are a night owl and do your most creative work at night, consider making practice a part of that creativity. Your frame of mind, level of preparation, and ability to trust yourself all play an integral part in your ability to play well as an organist. By examining activities you perform confidently and joyfully, you will likely discover an unconscious routine that makes that activity more enjoyable, effective, and successful.

Do take the time to get to know your particular instrument. Learn about the builder and their philosophy of the craft.

Do take the time to get to know your particular instrument. Learn about the builder and their philosophy of the craft. Visit the website of the Associated Pipe Organ Builders of America.* Their vision is focused on organs that serve the musical and liturgical needs of congregations. Their site contains a plethora of information about building and purchasing pipe organs, which may not seem relevant to the humble player, but consider how much of that information will assist you in learning about and caring for your own instrument. You will also likely learn new ways to consider how music moves through your worship space, which is necessary when choosing appropriate sounds to lead your congregation. For a quick overview of the stops on your organ, visit the Encyclopedia of Organ Stops website.* This site is an index of hundreds of organ stops with basic descriptions for each, including some audio examples. This resource is not authoritative but is a reasonable place to begin your research. Broaden your search with resources such as *Understanding the Pipe Organ* by John R. Shannon or *The Organ* from the Grove Instrument

Series. These resources contain quite a bit of technical information and are a wonderful resource for learning about the mechanics of the instrument. Never fear the instrument or its complexities. Instead, have a healthy respect for it and be willing to learn about the things that you do not know or understand. As in relationships with other humans, knowledge is the key to understanding how the organ functions best, and understanding that function will lead to more confident playing.

Take advantage of the carefully curated resources available through organizations such as the American Guild of Organists (AGO).* The AGO is a national professional association that is dedicated to the field of organ and choral music. The membership consists of both professional and amateur organists from the level of beginner to concert artist. Some members are not organists themselves but have a love for the instrument and its music. On their website you will find any number of resources, including links to instructional and educational videos about organs and organ playing. Most of these resources are free but consider joining. Part of the joy found in any activity is finding others who share your interest and commitment. Ask your church to help fund your membership fees, as the resources and information you will glean from the organization will help you to become a better organist and a better leader of worship services. Go to organ concerts. Listen to as many different types of instruments as you can. Listen to as much organ music as you can. Become familiar with its tones and timbres as you would become familiar with a person's likes and dislikes. Visit the website for Pipedreams,* a nationally distributed weekly radio program exploring the pipe organ. You will find a wonderfully curated collection of all types of music played on all types of organs—a treasure trove of inspiration! You can probably find recordings of music you are working on yourself. Listening to others play your music is always a wonderful way to enhance your practice!

Most importantly, get to know your physical self. Give some thought to how your body is feeling before you slide on to the bench. Stress, fatigue, and frustration can follow you to the instrument and filter into your playing.

Most importantly, get to know your physical self. Give some thought to how your body is feeling before you slide on to the bench. Stress, fatigue, and frustration can follow you to the instrument and filter into your playing. Your openness, positivity, and relaxed state of being can filter in as well. Much like meditation and prayer, practice is a time when you can decide what enters your mind. Plan segments of intense focus followed by periods of flexible thought patterns. Our brains are very much like the muscles in our body—intense activity needs to be followed by a period of rest and recovery. Every thirty minutes or so (or less!) get off the bench and stretch. It is good for the body and helps the mind to relax and refocus. And speaking of focus, put away all your devices. If you must, leave a ringer on in case of emergencies but keep the screen out of sight. If your mind keeps returning to an email or text you need to deal with, leave the instrument to deal with it and come back to your place of focus. Control distractions as much as you are able.

Lastly, remember that you ARE an organist. Never label yourself or allow yourself to be labeled as a "pianist who plays the organ." To do so denies yourself ownership of the music you create and the wonderful craft of which you are now a part. There are no pianists at the organ—only organists who either play the instrument well or don't. The category we all belong in is completely up to us and our willingness to learn and be diligent about our skills. Playing the organ for worship carries an enormous responsibility. We are responsible for carrying not only the people's song but the truth of the Scriptures and of our faith in a way that engages, supports, and inspires. The music we play journeys with people throughout the many changes of life, offering a balm for healing, a spark for joy, and a connection to their faith.

* Resources

The American Guild of Organists, www.agohq.org

The Associated Pipe Organ Builders of America, www.apoba.com/resources

Encyclopedia of Organ Stops, www.organstops.org

Pipedreams, www.pipedreams.org

The Work of Our Hands: Gathered in God's Name

Lauren Wright Pittman

Lauren Wright Pittman is director of branding and founding creative partner of A Sanctified Art, a collaborative arts ministry providing multimedia resources for church leaders and spiritual seekers.

Editor's Note: Lauren Wright Pittman designed and created the installation for the 2021 PAM Worship and Music Conference, which centered around the theme "Gathered in God's Name." Here, she describes the thought process behind her artwork.

The major inspiration for this work is Indian Christian artist Jyoti Sahi. I had the good fortune of meeting him on a trip to Southern India while I was a student at Columbia Theological Seminary. Sahi uses mandalas to represent the movement and identity of God and to engage with parables and other texts from Scripture.

Jyoti Sahi also uses the mandala to explain the Trinity. The mandala has a circular design; at the center point is God the creator, source, and mystery; you can see a circle at the center of my installation that represents the same. The radius—what radiates from the center—represents the movement of the Spirit. And the diameter images Christ, the fullness of God and the completion of God's promises.

I created a radial design that also includes five banners. Together they reflect the texts for each day of the week of the conference. Before I share my thought process, I want to stress that I'm not prescribing for you what this means. What I'm offering is my intention and my thought process. Whatever you've seen is true and right and good. Others have shared with me the things they have seen, and that has added to the meaning for me.

The left-most banner depicts Pentecost, when we gather in God's name, and the theme of the first day of the conference. I wanted to visually fill the space to image the wind and sound felt and heard that day. Above the head of each person is three flames (trinitarian symbolism is important to me). The red medallion for this day pulls the image of the three flames from the banner, which shows people who are open to the visions from, and movement of, the Spirit.

Day 2 we celebrated Baptism of the Lord, when we gather in the waters. I wanted the first and second banners to have interplay—we are gathered in the midst of wind and sound and also at the waters of baptism. So, the hands of one of the people in the first banner—one who is in the fire—also has hands in the water of the second banner. The blue medallion features a bird like a dove—the description of the Holy Spirit from Acts—while the banner itself features the swirling movement of water.

Reign of Christ is the focus of Day 3 and serves as the central point of the five banners. Jesus is not like earthly kings we know, but a just ruler, like the morning sunrise and the light gleaming off the grass, as 2 Samuel says. Here I offer the dual images of the sun, or the just ruler, and Christ as the morning star. Simplified laurel branches, hearkening back to the Roman era when victors would be crowned with laurel, are joined by stylized mountain laurel flowers, referring to a king who makes sure that all people have what they need. Finally, I'll point out that the symbol at the center is also an eight-pointed star, signifying the eighth day of creation, another pointer to Christ as Alpha and Omega.

So far, then, you can see from left to right the Spirit descending in the downward movement of the first two banners, the Alpha and Omega at the center, and then ascending movement in panels 4 and 5.

On Day 4, we celebrate Ash Wednesday. I began with the idea of dust and our own fragility and mortality. "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," we say on this day. And yet there is a hopeful turn. This banner includes the hyssop flower (mentioned in Psalm 51) and reflects our confessional posture. From the bottom of the banner, where there is dust, fragility, and confession, we see blossoms arising until flowers are in full bloom. It is as if we move from Ash Wednesday to All Saints, when we give thanks for those who have gone before us. The flowers at the top of the banner are modeled on fire poppies, which grow and thrive in ash, as we arise and bloom from the ashes and dust.

The fifth panel represents World Communion. The words of Psalm 26 came to mind: "I walk in faithfulness" . . . "in integrity" . . . "my foot stands on level ground." In this last banner you see barefooted people moving out, ready to act.

All of this radiates out from the center—the mystery of God, a resting place for the eyes, the center of everything. The movement of the Spirit is all around—the breath of life, empowering. And the light of Christ holds everything together.

Preparing in Private to Lead Worship in Public

William McNair

Introduction

When we worship, we bring into the public some of the same activities that we practice in private. We pray in private but also in public worship. We read the Bible in private and contemplate the meaning of Scriptures for our lives, and we also read and hear Scriptures interpreted in public worship. Until the pandemic, we sang hymns in public; unfortunately, during the pandemic we could only sing in private. Hopefully, by the time you read this, we are all once again singing together in public worship.

There are, of course, many differences between the public and private versions of these activities. One big difference is that we tend to prepare better for the public version than we do for the private version. My private prayers are often a jumble of disorganized thoughts that make sense only to me and, hopefully, my God. However, if I pray in public, I try to organize my thoughts so that other people can understand them. When I sing in private, I can slow down and ponder a phrase, but if I slow down in public, I'll be left behind. We need the public and private versions of all these activities. The organized, well-thought-out public version gives us a way to share in worship along with others. Because of the planning and preparation that goes into it, the public version can give anyone present a new way to understand a scriptural text and its relationship to daily life. The private version offers each one of us a chance to pause and reflect for as long as we wish and a chance to consider as many different options as we wish.

So, we need to practice the elements of worship both in public and in private in order to benefit in these various ways. Indeed, if you are a worship leader, your leadership in public worship most certainly benefits from your private practice of prayer, meditation, and music. More specifically, if you are a musician worship leader, your private musical practice is essential to doing your best in leading public worship. That practice may focus on different skills and elements of worship, but it is successful if it is ultimately focused on making worship as meaningful as possible for as many people as possible.

Practice and Preparation

Preachers spend a good deal of time preparing to preach on Sunday. I am not a preacher, but I understand that this preparation generally involves reading, pondering, writing, and editing. I know that it may also involve practicing the delivery of the sermon from the pulpit. I cannot count the number of times that I was interrupted from a Saturday practice session at the organ in the sanctuary by a minister who wanted to rehearse his or her sermon. I was always happy to oblige. It made me feel a kinship with the minister over our preparation regimens. There is probably a great deal of similarity between the ways that ministers and musicians prepare for their contributions to a worship service.

Most musicians are trained in basically this way; practice, practice, practice, and then perform. You cycle through the process of practicing a piece of music until you achieve something as near as possible to perfection, then you perform it, and then you start the cycle over. During the years of training, teachers may teach you some music theory that helps you to better understand the music you play, but it is rare for a teacher to spend time helping a student learn to improvise or compose music. This is

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understandable; musicians are primarily performers. It is truer for church musicians than any other type of musician. Church musicians perform every Sunday and often more than that, with weddings, funerals, and other special services. While a concert artist may perform the same concerto or recital program over and over, a church musician must constantly be learning new repertoire, whether that is solo repertoire, choral music, bell choir music, hymn settings, or other music. So the church music profession probably attracts musicians who are especially proficient at executing this cycle of practice / perform.

Improvisation and Composition

There is another cycle that is a bit less well known. It is the "improvise / compose / refine" cycle. For many composers, a new piece of music begins as an improvisation. A composer may have several ideas for a new piece, and by trying out these ideas in private (singing or playing an instrument), a composer can make choices about what best expresses their musical intent. Once they have settled on something, they will eventually "write it down" (I say this in quotation marks, because nowadays writing is often done on a computer using composing software). It doesn't end there. The written score will undergo countless revisions until the composer is finally satisfied with the piece of music. It is important to realize that, although a written composition often starts life as an improvisation, a composer will spend much more time and energy revising and refining. This is a key difference between an improvised piece of music and a written one: even an improvisation by a truly great improviser is not as perfect as a written composition by that same person.

Some of you may be familiar with the story of J. S. Bach going to visit the court of King Frederich II. King Frederich, who in addition to being a monarch was an excellent musician, asked Bach to improvise on a theme that the king himself had written. After Bach had improvised for a while, the king asked Bach to improvise a six-voice fugue on the theme. Bach naturally obliged the king, but he was not entirely satisfied with the result. (Who among us today would even attempt to improvise a six-voice fugue?) So he went home and wrote out the fugue and several other pieces based on the king's theme. That composition is *The Musical Offering*. So, if even J. S. Bach, probably one of the greatest improvisers who ever lived, could improve on his improvisation by writing it down and revising and refining it, then so can any composer.

As the story about Bach also illustrates, church musicians are often called on to improvise in public. Nowadays we are, of course, more likely to improvise in a public worship service than for the king, but that can be no less daunting (improvising for the King of Kings instead of the king).

Getting comfortable with improvising, like getting comfortable with performing, requires practice. One of the worst-kept secrets of music is that *performers* spend a large majority of their time practicing, whereas *composers* spend a large majority of their time revising and refining. Our preaching sisters and brothers can relate. How many hours do they spend writing and refining that sermon which they deliver in ten to twenty minutes on Sunday morning? Improvisers also spend a lot of time practicing to develop their improvisation skills.

If you are not a church musician, it is important to understand how much time church musicians already invest in preparing, whether it is practicing an existing piece or refining a newly composed piece. If they want to become proficient improvisers, they will spend a lot of time preparing to do that as well. This is one of the best-kept secrets of music: improvisation requires practice. There is this romantic notion that improvisers live in the best possible world where they don't have to practice, they just improvise; and they don't have to revise or refine because they never write anything down. Most musicians know better. Becoming a proficient public improviser can require a tremendous investment of time up front. Most of the great improvisers whom I have met started when they were very young, so they had the double advantage of a child's sponge-

It may be obvious, but here is another truth about improvisation: regardless of how good one is at improvising, private improvisations will always be freer and more creative than public ones. All of that freedom and creativity will inevitably lead to some major mishaps but that's okay in private.

like mind and plenty of free time to work on it. Also, most composers have some skill as improvisers simply due to the fact that many compositions start out as improvisations.

It may be obvious, but here is another truth about improvisation: regardless of how good one is at improvising, private improvisations will always be freer and more creative than public ones. All of that freedom and creativity will inevitably lead to some major mishaps but that's okay in private. Public improvisation is almost always more careful. In public, even the best improvisers tend to fall back on musical formulas that they have practiced and know will work. Of course, the more practiced at improvisation one is, the more comfortable one will be with taking risks in public. So one's public improvisations will become freer as a result of more private practice at it.

Private Improvisation and Public Playing

My father-in-law was the organist at a large Presbyterian church for most of his adult life. The minister, naturally, chose hymns for their texts, not knowing whether the tunes were familiar to the congregation. On Sunday morning during worship, if he felt that the congregation was struggling to sing a hymn, he would stop in the middle of the hymn and ask the organist to find a more familiar tune that would work with the text. If you are an organist, you can imagine what that would be like the first time it happened. You would furiously search the metrical index for a "familiar" tune that matched the meter of the hymn. Then you would sight-read it publicly while the congregation would sing along. I know that for many of you, that would not be a big problem, since you've probably played most of the hymnal in your years as an organist. Still, it would probably raise your pulse and blood pressure a bit.

My father-in-law developed a strategy for coping with these little interruptions. He knew what tunes were familiar to the congregation. So when the minister chose a hymn with an unfamiliar tune, he would find (in advance) a familiar tune that worked. That way he was preparing in private for what would likely happen in public worship.

Hopefully, you will not have the same sort of experience in the middle of a worship service as my father-in-law did. But there are a few points during a normal worship service where it is fairly common for organists to be called upon to improvise:

- An interlude: a short segment of music to connect two elements of worship; for example, finishing communion, seating baptism participants after a baptism, connecting the end of the anthem to the beginning of the doxology
- A voluntary: prelude, offertory, postlude
- A hymn setting: hymn introduction or free accompaniment to a stanza

With a little practice, you will realize that learning to improvise an interlude or voluntary is relatively easy. If you are improvising on a hymn tune while no one is singing along, you can insert beats or measures at phrase endings while you think about what comes next. If you don't play the melody exactly right, no one should care too much; after all, it's an improvisation. Perhaps it was an intentional variation. And you can even improvise your own melody where no one will know whether you played it exactly as you intended.

Learning to improvise free hymn accompaniments may be the biggest challenge facing a church organist. While you have some freedom with the harmonies, you absolutely cannot miss anything about the tune. If you do, you'll confuse the congregation and the experience will be the exact opposite of your intent. While you intend to inspire them to sing with conviction, if you do anything unusual with the tune, you will probably cause them to quit singing altogether.

But for organists, playing free hymn accompaniments is like a high calling. Let's face it: playing free hymn accompaniments is very effective and very exciting. Four stanzas of a hymn played with no variation (except maybe registration) doesn't energize singing like a little reharmonization does, especially if the reharmonization reflects and supports the hymn text. If you are an organist, you have probably heard countless times that the church organist's most important job is accompanying congregational singing. But it is hard to get started improvising free hymn accompaniments if you have never done it before. I found for myself that in order to be comfortable "improvising" a free hymn accompaniment, I spent so much time preparing that by Sunday I had mostly memorized an arrangement that I had worked out in advance. There was very little improvising going on by the time I got to the public worship service.

So, I decided on a different approach. Each week, I selected at least one of the hymns for the

upcoming Sunday. I spent a little time in private improvising on the tune. I developed some musical ideas and then wrote out a free accompaniment to the hymn tune. I then used it to accompany the final stanza of the hymn on Sunday. I didn't spend years learning to improvise; I had immediate success. I could ponder the hymn text and reflect the text in the accompaniment. After doing this for a few years, I got pretty good at it. I gradually developed a file of hymn settings that I could use when the same hymn tune came around again (think AMAZING GRACE or HYFRYDOL). After about twenty years, I had written something for almost every hymn that ever came up.[1] At that point, I was free to write new settings or revise ones that I had written before.

We occasionally encounter times during worship that call for something other than what we prepared. It may be the result of poor planning, it may be the result of something unforeseen, or it may be the movement of the Holy Spirit. If it's the last of these, how will you respond?

Do I recommend this approach for everyone? No, not necessarily, although I would be interested to see what other organists might produce. But it worked for me and there were some unexpected benefits. In addition to developing a library of free accompaniments and introductions, I developed a greater understanding of and appreciation for hymn texts. With time to ponder the text of the final stanza in private, I found myself writing harmonies that reflected or emphasized the text (a very simple example of what I mean by this would be using minor or diminished chords to reflect the darker emotions of a given text). That greater sensitivity to the text also led me to consciously select a registration as perfectly suited as possible to reflect the text for each stanza of a hymn. No longer was I satisfied to use the same six pistons for all hymn playing. Fortunately, I was playing on an instrument with plenty of memory, so I could use a different memory level for each hymn.

I also found that this private practice of composing helped me to understand and interpret compositions written by other composers. It made me a braver public improviser when the situation called for it. Most importantly, it allowed me to lead countless worship services with greater quality hymn playing than I could otherwise have done. I know that the hymn singing was a better experience for some members of the congregation because they told me so. It was so very gratifying to have someone come up after a service and comment on how the final stanza of a hymn lifted their spirit or focused their attention on a sentence or phrase of text. Of course, that was rare, but it happened.

Conclusion

If you are an organist, you may have asked yourself the question: Do I need to learn to improvise? It is natural that you would; improvisation is the subject of many books and countless articles. Every year at the Montreat Worship and Music Conference there are classes that, if not totally aimed at teaching improvisation, at least include some time devoted to doing so. But the real question you should ask yourself is: How can I lead worship more effectively? Of course, effective worship leadership requires preparation and planning. Improvisation seems to stand in opposition to those activities since it implies an element of spontaneity, something unplanned. But you can plan to improvise.

This article has identified some of the foreseeable situations that arise during a worship service requiring organists to improvise. It documents options for organists to address the normal situations during a worship service when a need to improvise might arise. So, if you are prepared for these, you will be prepared for the vast majority of situations. You can choose whether to improvise or compose your interludes, voluntaries, and hymn settings.

But sometimes, regardless of all our careful preparation and planning, we encounter a situation for which we are unprepared. The truth is that no matter how much planning and preparation we do, we occasionally encounter times during worship that call for something other than what we prepared. It may be the result of poor planning, it may be the result of something unforeseen, or it may be the movement of the Holy Spirit. If it's the last of these, how will you respond? Do you dare reject that impetus? If your goal is effective worship leadership, then maybe the most effective thing to do is to improvise at this point.

I once worked at a church where the senior minister was great at speaking "ad lib." He was so

good at it that you almost hoped he would go “off script.” Yet most of the associate ministers at that church feared it like the plague. It caused great anxiety in the moments before a worship service when he would decide to change something in the service and asked an associate to do something that he or she was unprepared to do. As a musician, I always viewed these interactions with a mixture of glee and profound empathy. I hate it when a minister asks me to change something musical in the moments before worship, so I was empathetic. But since it was someone else, I perversely enjoyed watching them squirm a bit. Maybe we just had not planned well enough for the upcoming service. Maybe something had changed in the days between planning and worship. Maybe he was led by the Holy Spirit to make these changes. I honestly don’t know, but I know that he was certain that he was improving the quality of worship by making these “ad lib” changes.

Ultimately your personality influences your comfort level with improvisation. Some people fear it. Some people relish it. Most people fall somewhere in the middle. I suggest that you figure out for yourself where you fall on that continuum and prepare accordingly. If you have some fear of improvising in public right now, take time in private to improvise and write out arrangements to play in church. If you are a fearless improviser, take some time in private to develop your editing, reviewing, and refining skills. The long-term effect of your preparation may move you to a different place on the continuum—becoming more comfortable with public improvisation and/or more skilled at musical composition.

Note

1. The product of my years of writing hymn settings is available online at hymnsfororgan.org. There you will find over three hundred hymn introductions and reharmonizations available for download for free.

Three New Hymnals

Santo, Santo, Santo: Cantos para el pueblo de Dios Holy, Holy, Holy: Songs for the People of God

(Chicago: GIA Publications, 2019)

Reviewed by Chris Ángel

Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans" (John 4:9). When Jesus speaks with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:4–42), he is crossing several human borders. Jesus is not supposed to be talking with a woman (John 4:27), let alone a Samaritan woman. But in the reign of God, the divisions between women and men, or Samaritans and Jews, have no place. Yet all too often our churches can be the site of such divisions. Like the Samaritans and Jews, we too have arguments over how to properly worship (John 4:20). One area that has proven particularly contentious in many churches is how to provide ministry to groups who speak different languages. Even though such groups in our churches are kin to each other—again, like the Jews and Samaritans—the hostility can be so strong it is difficult to remember the common bonds. Church staff members have the challenge of following Jesus' example in reaching over human borders to unite groups as one people of God.

Santo, Santo, Santo / Holy, Holy, Holy is a bilingual (Spanish-English) hymnal that is designed to help Protestant communities cross over these artificial borders. Its subtitle, *Cantos para el pueblo de Dios / Songs for the People of God*, alludes to its purpose of providing one songbook for diverse groups to all use together. It is a product of two well-resourced, ecumenically-minded organizations: GIA Publications, which publishes a variety of choral and congregational music, hymnals, and recordings, particularly in the Roman Catholic sphere; and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, a center for studying Christian worship rooted in the Reformed tradition of its hosts. Any book of this sort will be necessarily incomplete, given the incredible diversity of music available in each of its languages, and the diversity of cultures that each language represents. Nonetheless, this book should encourage churches to "enlarge the site of [their] tent" (Isa. 54:2) and offer worship that transcends borders. It is a notable achievement for what it accomplishes, which is bringing together a wide variety of music, a selection that crosses borders. I will focus on three of the borders this book crosses: the borders between languages, the borders between musical styles, and the borders between denominations.

Crossing the Border of Language

Santo, Santo, Santo is designed as a fully bilingual book that strives to give equal weight to both languages. There are about seven hundred songs in the book, and every one appears in both Spanish and English. There are several hundred songs that originated in Spanish, several hundred songs that originated in English, and a smaller number that originated in a third language and were translated into both Spanish and English. There are no orders of worship (more on this later). A few dozen texts for use in worship are included: psalm texts that could be used with refrains and creeds that include the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and Justo González's Credo Hispano / Hispanic Creed.

Because the book is fully bilingual, it serves first as a collection of skillful translations. Translation is a difficult enough art with prose. But translating song lyrics complicates the matter considerably. To be retrofitted to an existing melody, a translated lyric must maintain a similar pattern of accents, the same or similar number of syllables, and perhaps even match an existing rhyme scheme. This requires great sensitivity and translators who have the heart of a poet to select words and phrases that convey the

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same meaning and scan properly, but also have the proper nuance. This hymnal benefits from work GIA did in producing a similar bilingual hymnal for Roman Catholic communities, *Oramos Cantando / We Pray in Song* (2013). For that book, hundreds of existing translations were carefully studied and revised, and some 250 new translations were commissioned from a team of translators. It is clear from reading the preface that a project of similar scope was undertaken for *Santo, Santo, Santo*. The editors have taken great care with these translations to minimize the number of melodic changes to accommodate the different number of syllables from a second language. By subtly adding a melisma, breaking apart a tied note, or adding an unaccented pickup, the essential shape of a melody can be preserved.

The result is a very versatile volume that can be used in several different ways. One tremendous benefit is the ability of people to sing both languages simultaneously, because the notes and accents align. Clinicians from GIA have promoted this method for years. This may sound like it would lead to a chaotic musical experience, but a confident congregation, or one with strong leadership, can experience their own mini-Pentecost with people praising God in multiple languages simultaneously. Other congregations could alternate languages between stanzas of a hymn or verses of a song, or even sing a refrain in one language and verses in another. This might model hospitality and reciprocity, as various singers in the congregation take a turn in leading worship. It could also provide a pedagogic purpose in helping people learn a new language—or a new song.

Crossing the Border of Musical Style

Santo, Santo, Santo contains a wide variety of well-known Christian songs representing a wide variety of styles. Consider the diverse origins represented by the following selections: the plainchant "Of the Father's Love Forgotten / Fruto del amor divino"[1]; Luther's strophic setting of Psalm 130, "Out of the Depths / De lo profundo"; Joseph Gilmore and William Bradbury's "He Leadeth Me / Me guía él"; the spiritual "Go Down, Moses" or "When Israel Was in Egypt's Land / El pueblo de Israel clamó"; Stuart Hine's "How Great Thou Art / Cuán grande es él"; and Brian Doerksen's "Come, Now Is the Time to Worship / Ven, es tiempo de adorarle." Songs that originated in Spanish are no less diverse: from Argentina, Nicolas Martinez's "Cristo vive / Christ Is Risen"; the Caribbean corito[2] "Si tuvieras fe / If You Only Had Faith"; from Mexico, Methodist musician Rubén Ruíz Ávila's "Mantos y palms / Filled with Excitement" for Palm Sunday; from Texas singer and pastor Marcos Witt, "Renuévame / Come, Change My Heart"; and "Cuando el pobre nada tiene / When the Hungry Who Have Nothing," from two Spanish priests, José Olivar and Miguel Manzano.

This hymnal contains such a range of styles that it places a special responsibility on those who select music from it. There are musicians who will be conversant in every musical style in this book and have the abilities to perform them well on a variety of instruments. But for many of us, this book is a window into music we haven't yet performed ourselves. Thus, the responsibility is to approach it humbly, as one should always do with music from other cultures. Musicians encountering new styles or new pieces would be well advised to start by listening to recordings of them (something made much easier in the present day thanks to YouTube and other Internet video services). Performing these pieces may also involve recruiting additional instrumentalists or singers who have experience with them.

These kinds of relationships will be especially helpful for those cases when musicians need to rely less on the printed scores. For example, some of the songs in the book come from an oral tradition and are thus known to different churches in slightly different ways. The editors have chosen to include multiple versions of several songs, such as "Yo quiero ser, Señor amado / I Want to Be What You Would Make Me" (author unknown, the song is presented in two similar, although distinct, versions on facing pages). Similarly, familiarity with the style of Jonas Myrin and Matt Redman's "Ten Thousand Reasons / Diez mil razones" will be very helpful in performing this song, in which there can be some slight variations, not only from verse to verse, but from performance to performance.

GIA Publications has done much to foster congregational song, including their promotion of writers who work in traditional strophic forms. Jean Sibelius's tune FINLANDIA appears three times in the book, twice with recently-composed texts that speak to contemporary pastoral concerns. Mary Louise Bringle's "When Memory Fades / Cuando se desvanecen las memorias" presents the perseverance of God's love and care through human frailty. Michael Joncas's "A Place Called Home / Es un hogar" is a prayer for a society that honors

all human lives, including those of the homeless and refugees. A slightly older text, Ruth Duck's "Diverse in Culture, Nation, Race / De raza, cuna y nación," could well serve as a theme for the whole hymnal. The text prays for the assembly to become a "meeting ground" (centro de unidad).

Crossing the Border of Denominations

According to the preface, there are musical selections from over thirty different denominations included in this book. On one hand, this is a powerful statement about the commonalities between Christian traditions, and makes this book a valuable resource for occasions when people from multiple denominations are praying together. On the other hand, this does place additional responsibility on individual musicians to make sure that they are selecting music that fits doctrinally with the church that they are serving. It also means that no single order of worship would suffice to be placed in this book, unlike many hymnals. Thus, those that use this book will want to pair it with other worship resources to plan a service.

The editors have taken care to make sure this hymnal can be easily used with a variety of worship practices. The music selections in this hymnal are grouped thematically. Two large sections, "Celebrating the Gospel Story / Celebramos la historia del evangelio" and "Assembling for Worship / Nos congregamos para adorar," are subdivided into sections of about ten to thirty songs each. Churches that design their own worship can simply follow the thematic structure. But churches that follow the liturgical calendar will find in the first section a structure that closely parallels the liturgical year. Churches that follow a more historical order of service will find in the second section a variety of helpful sections, corresponding to songs for morning and evening, songs about the Word of God and songs about baptism and communion.

Who Uses This Book

Any church that is doing any ministry to Spanish-speaking Christians—and these days this number would be a sizable percentage of Protestant congregations—will find in this book a useful reference. Even if there is only the occasional need, it is now easier than ever to use and pay proper copyright fees for even a single song or translation. As a whole, this hymnal would work especially well in educational settings, such as retreat houses, chapels at camp sites, and seminaries—places that are already meeting sites for groups of people who might not be limited to a single congregation. As the editors note, this hymnal could even serve as a textbook for a variety of seminary courses—church music, ministry, worship, mission, ethnodoxology, even as a language primer for those preparing for ministry.

As I suggested at the beginning, there might also be congregations that are struggling to serve both English- and Spanish-speaking members for whom this book could be a step towards much needed common ground. The use of this book could even be a step towards reconciling communities in conflict by providing a concrete example of their shared heritage. Perhaps even before a shared service, a group sing where people can suggest some of their favorite songs to sing together might be a way to experience even familiar songs in new ways. In this way, music can be an act of reconciliation, the ministry with which we have been trusted (2 Cor. 5:19).

Notes

1. This hymn can be claimed as a Spanish hymn, as the author, Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, was a Roman poet who lived in the area that is now considered northern Spain.
2. Coritos are usually short, simple songs, often anonymous, often sung from memory. Because of this, there can be variations.

One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism: An African American Ecumenical Hymnal

(Chicago: GIA Publications, 2018)

Reviewed by Thomas L. Baynham Jr.

Lisa M. Weaver, associate professor of worship at Columbia Theological Seminary, authored an effective and brilliant introduction to *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism: An African American Ecumenical Hymnal*:

> This hymnal, in terms of breadth of theological scope, contains a compilation of music reflective of ecclesial traditions and theological positions without attempt to affirm, deny, or reconcile positions. Each stands on its own in theology, content, and beauty. The 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation in some ways provides good background (even if not explicitly mentioned). I think of this in terms of 'Fallout and Fruit.' While the Reformation itself essentially effected a church split (fallout), the variety of traditions that has emerged since then provides perspectives and vantage points of value, making the sum of our parts (tradition) richer than each of its parts (fruit).[1]

Written specifically for the African American worshiping diaspora, *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism* (*1LFB*) offers a valuable and needed resource and preserves the various cultural, musical, and theological traditions represented within the diaspora. In addition, it provides the kind of balance needed in the publication of hymnals for the twenty-first century, a healthy balance between historical/traditional hymnody and the vibrant contemporary praise and worship songs and choruses. Unlike its predecessor, *The African American Heritage Hymnal (AAHH), 1LFB* more broadly represents the diversity of Black Protestant worship and is more widely ecumenical.

Every new project or undertaking comes with a set of priorities. In her foreword to the hymnal, Dr. Weaver describes the core values for *1LFB*:

> First, we wanted the richness of our theological, cultural, and musical heritages to be preserved. . . . Second (related to the first), we wanted to provide a volume that would allow the young(er) people to know and learn a breadth of the songs of the church tradition. . . . Third, as an *ecumenical* hymnal, we [the core committee] all echoed one another in expressing how we envision this hymnal providing a needed (and perhaps overdue) understanding of our unity in the Body of Christ.[2]

These core values are well represented in the organization of the hymnal and its five basic themes: the Assembly at Worship, the Celebration of the Gospel Story, the Gospel in the Christian Life, Freedom Songs and Patriotic Hymns, and Service Music.

The opening section or theme, Assembly at Worship, reflects the order of worship in most congregations: Gathering; Adoration and Praise; Thanksgiving; Repentance, Confession, Lament; Grace, Mercy, Assurance; Word; Prayer; Offering/Stewardship of Our Lives; Baptism; Confirmation/Coming of Age; Lord's Supper/Holy Communion; and Sending and Blessing.

The second section, the Celebration of the Gospel Story, is designed to walk the congregation musically through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ: Creation and Providence; Advent; Christmas; Epiphany; Life of Christ; Ash Wednesday and Lent;

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Maundy Thursday; Good Friday; Easter; Ascension; Pentecost; the Trinity; and Christ the King.

The hymns and songs found in the third section, the Gospel in the Christian Life, celebrate the significant marks in the faith journey of the congregation: Christian Life, Discipleship; Faith, Trust, Love; Marking Time (Morning/Evening); Marriage; Ordination/Installation/Commissioning; Healing and Comfort; Mission, Kingdom, Social Concern; the Church and the Communion of the Saints; Second Coming; and Eternal Life.

The choice of wording for naming the fourth section, Freedom Songs and Patriotic Hymns, speaks of the importance of lifting both in the context of worship. One of the challenges I find with my congregation is understanding the proper use of patriotic songs in the context of worship, that is, the need to be mindful of singing freedom and patriotic songs in the spirit of gratefulness to God and not in the spirit of Christian nationalism. The final section, Service Music, includes general music for prayer and reflection time as well as appropriate psalms and canticles. The inclusion of these pieces makes this material more accessible, especially for congregations that are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with its usage. The inclusion of service music in this hymnal is also important for historical reasons. For most African American denominations and congregations, the development of service music was modeled on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American Methodist worship. Dr. Birgitta Johnson, professor of African American Music and Ethnomusicology at the University of South Carolina and member of the nine-member core committee for *1LFB*, offered this assessment regarding the inclusion of service in the hymnal:

> Service music sets specific ritual or worship elements to music. It's common in liturgical traditions such as Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist, and Lutheran church worship. Service music supports the portions of the church service that support rituals or practices that may combine singing, recitation of Scripture and other religious rites. Examples include responsorial chants or songs, the recitation or singing of the Lord's Prayer, Apostles' Creed, Gloria Patri, psalms, responses in Holy Communion prayers, the Holy Mass, and more.[3]

Service music also plays an important part in introducing or solidifying scriptural truths through congregational song.

In the final section of this article, I want to highlight some of the hymns and songs, old and new whose inclusion in this collection helped me to appreciate even more why this hymnal is a valuable resource for congregational singing and worship. I love that Bob Batastini's text set to Jacques Berthier's tune "There Is One Lord" (Gathering) opens the hymnal, for it serves as the defining purpose of the hymnal. "The Lord Is in His Holy Temple" (Gathering) was sung in the churches of my parents every Sunday. When I was a child, its haunting, mysterious, yet inviting tune in D minor prepared the congregation for worship and gave affirmation to the presence of the Holy Spirit. I was pleased to see included several hymns and songs that evince the musical and worship diversity within the African American church diaspora: "Bless the Lord"; "Total Praise"; "Amen Siakudumisa"; "Oh, the Glory of Your Presence" (Adoration and Praise); "Oh, Give Thanks to the Lord"; "I Thank You, Jesus"; "In the Lord I'll Be Ever Thankful" (Thanksgiving); "I Know the Lord Has Laid His Hands on Me"; "Spirit, Bear Fruit in My Life" (Repentance, Confession, Lament); "God Has Smiled on Me"; "Yes, God Is Real"; "Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus" (Grace, Mercy and Assurance).

One of the challenges I find with my congregation is understanding the proper use of patriotic songs in the context of worship, that is, the need to be mindful of singing freedom and patriotic songs in the spirit of gratefulness to God and not in the spirit of Christian nationalism.

I come from a strong church music tradition. The first hymnal I ever sang from was the 1956 edition of the *Baptist Hymnal*. I remember the transition at Ebenezer from the 1956 hymnal to *The New National Baptist Hymnal*, published in 1977. Fourteen short years later, African American congregations were introduced to another new hymnal resource, the *African American Heritage Hymnal*, that included hymns and choruses from other faith traditions and

denominations, contemporary Christian songs, as well as music from contemporary African American writers (Richard Smallwood, Andraé Crouch, and Kirk Franklin).

The digital age presents a challenge to denominations to produce a hymnal that is current. *1LFB* comes as close to "hitting the mark" as any congregational hymnal has, especially for the African American worshiping diaspora. The days of hymnals being limited to hardback binding is coming to an end because as the Spirit speaks to text and tune writers, it is essential to the worshiping community for those gifts to be shared. An example of this progress is *Songs for the Holy Other*, a downloadable collection published by the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada in 2018. Not only does *1LFB* serve as the stepping-stone for future hymnal publications, I believe it will be the first step towards future collaborations of hymnody for congregations regardless of race or denomination.

Notes

1. Rev. Dr. Lisa M. Weaver, introduction to *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism: An African American Ecumenical Hymnal*, ed. W. James Abbington (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2018).
2. Rev. Dr. Lisa M. Weaver, foreword to *One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism*.
3. Joan Huyser-Honig and Birgitta Johnson, "Birgitta Johnson on New African American Hymnal," January 7, 2019, https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/birgitta-johnson-on-new-african-american-ecumenical-hymnal/.

Voices Together

(Harrisonburg, VA: MennoMedia, 2020)

Reviewed by David Bjorlin

In the introduction to the new Mennonite hymnal *Voices Together*, general editor Bradley Kauffman posits, "A hymnal holds together stories about who God is and what God does" (p. iii). Yet, what I believe makes denominational hymnals such fascinating resources and theological documents are two other stories they tell in the process. First, they tell the unfolding story of congregational song, especially among those denominations publishing hymnals in North America. Stated as a question, each new hymnal helps answer "Where is congregational song in North America going?" Second, they tell the particular story of a denomination and its theological tradition, which reminds us of the specific charisms that this smaller tradition offers to the larger church. In question form, we might ask, "What unique gifts does this denominational hymnal bring to the church?" Before exploring how *Voices Together* (*VT*) answers these two questions, it will be helpful first to give a general overview of the hymnal.

After the introductory material, the main body of *VT*'s hymns and songs is broken up into twelve sections that follow a general order of service: Gathering, Praising, Reconciling, Telling God's Story, Confessing Faith, Celebrating Baptism, Celebrating Communion, Sharing Our Stories, Praying, Giving, Living God's Story, and Sending. In a formatting difference from most hymnals, each song supplies both the tune name and meter directly under the title, while giving text, music, and copyright information at the bottom of the page. It's a subtle difference, but I found myself appreciating the simplicity and aesthetic balance of this format. Most of the songs also include accompanying guitar chords, another helpful feature that makes the songs more accessible to instrumentation beyond organ/piano. In addition to the expected congregational songs, there are twelve groupings of biblical texts built around a particular theme (e.g., "Advent and Birth of Jesus"), many formatted as responsive readings, that are paired with a piece of visual art by Mennonite artists. The final section of the hymnal (#850–1069) is composed of various worship resources that follow the same twelve thematic sections as the songs. Finally, the back pages include some of the most thorough topical and scriptural indexes that I have seen in a denominational hymnal, which will be an indispensable resource for worship planners. The formatting of the hymnal as a whole is liturgically and theologically coherent, aesthetically pleasing, and easily navigable for both worshiper and worship planner.

Now, let's return to our questions. First, what can *VT* tell us about where congregational song in North America is going? The first obvious answer from a cursory review of the hymnal is that *VT* continues the trend of diversification in denominational resources. There is first a great diversity of cultures, nationalities, and languages represented in *VT*, with songs or worship resources in fifty-one languages, including three resources in American Sign Language. For those songs written in a language other than English, the title and versification begin in the original language *followed by* the English translation. This may seem like an insignificant detail, but it honors the original source and helpfully reminds singers outside of the song's original language and culture of their

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borrowing. Many of these songs, especially songs of Indigenous/Native American origin, also originate from particular Mennonite communities. In white-majority denominations and churches, starting with the cultures and languages already present in your community is perhaps the most helpful starting point (but not an end point!) in mitigating against ethno-tourism/misappropriation.

Similarly, *VT* contains a wide range of musical idioms, traversing the common hymnic ground of chorales, gospel choruses, and African American spirituals to newer styles like folk/bluegrass, contemporary gospel, and contemporary worship music (CWM). Indeed, along with the CRC/RCA's *Lift up Your Hearts* (2013), it is the denominational hymnal that I believe has taken CWM most seriously and integrated it most seamlessly into its contents. About 10 percent of its contents (or seventy-one songs) are considered CWM. This is not your grandparents' hymnal! From this reviewer's point of view, this is a hopeful trend that will continue to help move our congregations out of the well-worn trenches of the "worship wars."

Voices Together has also continued the trend of many recent hymnals in revising and expanding language about humanity and God to make it more inclusive for all worshipers. Like past hymnals, it seeks to balance what can feel like the competing pastoral interests of retaining traditional language that has proved meaningful to generations of worshipers and revising traditional language that has been harmful, especially for groups historically marginalized by the church. While *VT* lands toward the revision side of the retention-revision spectrum, they break a good deal of new ground in the way they chose to revise. First, in addition to the more traditional gender-neutral substitutions of many recent hymnals ("All Creatures, Worship God Most High"), some texts in *VT* completely reverse the gender pronouns of God ("O worship our God, all glorious above, and joyfully laud her pow'r and her love," #74). Others are new compositions, like Jacque Jones's "We Long to Know Her," that sing of the first person of the Trinity (and not just the Holy Spirit!) as a woman whose work does not fit into traditional gender norms:

> We long to know her, the maker of heaven,
> knitter of sinews and planter of grains,
> guardian of sheep and the founder of vineyards:
> she is the stronghold who gently sustains. (#44)[1]

In addition to gendered language, the committee seemed attentive toward revising problematic language around age, race and ethnicity, sexuality and gender binaries, ability, and people of other faith traditions. For example, the committee specifically avoided language that equated darkness/blackness with evil and whiteness/light with good, while also adding songs that sang of the positive aspects of darkness (like Sarah Johnson's stunning "Darkness Is Not Dark to You, O God").

What I find most impressive about these revisions, however, is the obvious attention given to retaining the original poetics of the text. Too often, there is an inverse relationship between the number of revisions and the quality of the hymn's poetry. Yet, it is clear that *VT* editors took just as seriously the need to maintain the poetics of the text in the process of revision. Perhaps this can be seen by comparing the second stanza of "This Is My Father's World/This Is God's Wondrous World." The traditional version sings:

> This is my Father's world,
> the birds their carols raise;
> the morning light, the lily white,
> declare their Maker's praise.
> This is my Father's world,
> he shines in all that's fair;
> in the rustling grass I hear him pass,
> he speaks to me everywhere.

In revising both the masculine language and the equation of whiteness with goodness, *VT* combined recent revisions by other hymnal committees as well as alternate versions of the text found in early publications of the song to produce this new stanza:

> This is God's wondrous world;
> the birds their carols raise,
> the morning light, the dark of night,
> declare their Maker's praise.
> This is God's wondrous world;
> a wand'rer I may roam.
> Whate'r my lot, it matters not,
> My heart is still at home. (#180)[2]

Yes, each of the potential problematic parts have been revised, but revised in such a way that not only maintains the poetry, but, I would argue, adds to it: the delightful alliteration of "wondrous world," the powerful image of the roaming wanderer (bringing

to my mind both the Prodigal Son and the final stanza of "Come, Thou Fount"), and the new contrast drawn between "morning light" and "dark of night." These revisions help draw the circle of inclusion wider without sacrificing tradition or poetry.

To the next question: "What unique gifts does this denominational hymnal bring to the church?" Most obviously, the hymnal presents some of the best works of Mennonite song/hymn writers, tune composers, and liturgists. For those familiar with the world of hymnody and congregational song, there will be several familiar names among the Mennonite contributors—Adam Tice, James Clemens, Jean Janzen—but also many whose fine work will be introduced to a larger audience for the first time in these pages—Lee Dengler, Phil Campbell Enns, Sarah Kathleen Johnson, Anneli Loepp Thiessen, the Walking Roots Band, and Becca Lachman (whose "Could It Be That God Is Singing" is one of my new favorite hymns!).

In addition to the gifts of Mennonite artists, *VT* also offers the gift of the Mennonite theological tradition. For example, the seven hymns from the Anabaptist *Ausbund*, the sixteenth-century hymn collection written by Anabaptists imprisoned (and many martyred) for their faith, demonstrate a countercultural fidelity to the call of God in the midst of persecution, still a hallmark of the Anabaptist tradition. Moreover, there are several hymns that explore subjects that are particular theological and liturgical distinctions of Mennonites: foot washing ("Jesus Took a Towel"), adult baptism ("From the Waters I Will Rise") and child blessings/dedications ("Today Earth Is Singing"), and peacemaking ("We Are People of God's Peace").

Yet, the Mennonite distinction I was most struck by in my study of *VT* is the centrality of the human voice raised together in song. For anyone with even a cursory knowledge of Mennonite worship, the strength of the tradition's singing—often in parts—is perhaps one of their most obvious liturgical distinctions. With *VT*'s dozens of cyclical songs, praise choruses, canons, folk/shape-note tunes, and four-part hymns, it is evident that this collection is not meant to be heard sung by a cantor or a well-trained choir but sung by the entire congregation. More than that, the singable nature of this collection is a reflection of one of the bedrock Anabaptist theological convictions: the priesthood of all believers without hierarchical distinction. To state it another way, providing memorable and singable melodies is not simply a pragmatic tactic used to improve the church's singing, but a liturgical mandate that flows from this primary theological conviction of Mennonites. In this way, the title of *Voices Together* seems to perfectly encapsulate the content and purpose of the collection.

Finally, the Worship Resources section offers many gifts of its own through its collection of new and old prayers and rites. The committee again curated many preexisting prayers from a diverse variety of sources, both from expected sources like other denominations' prayer books, saints of the church (e.g., Dorothy Day, Oscar Romero, Teresa of Àvila), and other ecumenical communities (e.g., Iona's Wild Goose Worship Resources); to more unlikely sources like the Persian poet Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi, Rabbi Harold Kushner, and ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tsu. Further, in a Western liturgical tradition that often prizes simplicity and brevity in its liturgical prayers, *VT* takes several poetic risks, with phrases like "hostile howls," "God of rainbows and roly-polies," "diabolical dragon," or "whiff of Rome" alongside the more usual staid liturgical language. While not every choice might work for some congregations, I am glad they took the risk to poetically expand the prayer life of the church.

Among the many prayers and rites composed specifically for *VT*, perhaps the most interesting (at least for this liturgist) are those written around communion. With new invitations to the table and communion prayers, the theology that seems emphasized is an open table *for all* where the communal nature of the meal is emphasized while the sacrificial elements—particularly the images of Jesus' body broken and blood poured out for humanity—are deemphasized. These sacrificial elements have long been critiqued by feminist/womanist scholars (among others) for the problematic ways they can undergird systems of redemptive violence and acts of domestic abuse, and this seems to be on the forefront of the minds of the editors. Indeed, the first prayer, "Communion Prayer—Common Practice," uses a revision of the Words of Institution that the hymnal notes was "developed by MCUSA [Mennonite Church USA] with attention to the experience of survivors of abuse" (#941, footnote).

Having already used many of the songs and resources in my own congregational context, I know *VT* is an excellent resource for pastors, musicians, and worship leaders seeking to widen,

strengthen, and deepen the worship and song of their faith communities. Through its diverse and expansive vision of the church and its song, careful and skillful revisions, judicious but courageous risk-taking, and commitment to the distinctions of the Mennonite tradition, the creators of *Voices Together* have given a gift to the church. Like any good gift, our first response should be gratitude.

Notes

1. Jacque Jones, “We Long to Know Her,” in *Voices Together* (Harrisonburg, VA: MennoMedia, 2020), #44.
2. I gleaned several of these insights on textual revisions from a presentation several members of the *Voices Together* committee gave at the 2021 Annual Conference of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, entitled “Singing Welcome with Voices Together. ”

Ideas

Sung Table Liturgy Using “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You”

Margaret LaMotte Torrence

Several years ago, Eric Wall suggested using “O Lord, How Shall I Meet You” (now GTG 104)[1] as the Great Prayer of Thanksgiving. It seemed to me that the hymn text was missing both the component of salvation history and an epiclesis, so I wrote a couple of extra verses and composed this table liturgy.

Invitation to the Table

(*spoken*)

The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.
Let us pray.

O Lord, how shall I meet you, how welcome you aright?
Your people long to greet you, my hope, my heart’s delight!
O kindle, Lord most holy, a lamp within my breast,
to do in spirit lowly all that may please you best.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

You breathed us into being; you named us as your own;
and when we wandered from you, you grieved our hearts of stone.
You sent to us your prophets, your poets and your priests
who told us of your mercy, the promised day of peace.

Therefore, we praise you, joining our voices with choirs of angels and with all the faithful of every time and place who forever sing to the glory of your name:

Love caused your incarnation; love brought you down to me;
your thirst for my salvation procured my liberty.
O love beyond all telling, that led you to embrace
in love, all loves excelling, our lost and fallen race.

Great is the mystery of faith:
Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Pour out your breath upon us, and on this table spread,
that we might come to meet you in cup and broken bread.
And bind us to each other that we might live to see
your grace in blind eyes opening and captives breaking free.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts,
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, forever. Amen.

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The Words of Institution

The Sharing of the Bread and the Cup

Prayer after Communion

Gracious God,
truly you have met us here;
we have tasted your love,
and glimpsed your image reflected in
our neighbor's.
Continue to burn in our hearts, we pray,
until we recognize your coming
wherever bread and hearts are broken.
For we pray in the name of Jesus, whose
every breath was praise.

You come, O Lord, with gladness,
in mercy and goodwill,
to bring an end to sadness and bid our
fears be still.
In patient expectation we live for that
great day
when your renewed creation your glory
shall display.

Note

1. Text: Paul Gerhardt, 1653; trans. Catherine Winkworth and others, 1863, alt.

Window Open to Advent: Six Meditations on Hope

David B. Batchelder

Guidance

The image provided with these meditations is intended as an inspiration and companion to the six meditations. This spiritual exercise is meant to be experienced over consecutive days as a weeklong prayer-reflection. Since this approach invites you into a slowing down of the soul, do not read all the meditations at one sitting. If you abide by this discipline, you may find your spirit growing new insights that flower into prayer over time. There is a benefit to having patience as you allow a cumulative building of intensity as the week progresses. Therefore, find a quiet time and space to read just one over each of six successive days. The hope is that you will experience something of God's transforming grace in your spirit.

It is recommended that you begin each day viewing the image for several minutes before reading what is written. Allow your imagination to flow freely. Pay attention to your hopes and anxieties, your longing and yearning. Bring those thoughts to the text of the mediation. After reading each meditation, look again at the image and take it with you in your imagination.

Day One

Who opened the window, and why?
Was it to let something in, or something out?
Was it to hear, or to see?

When was the last time you stood near an open window?
What did you hear, see, and feel?

Windows make it possible to keep the unwanted out and wanted in.
But when that is not necessary,
an open window can make seamless
the space outside with the space inside.
Such a window as we see here
speaks of welcome and trust.

In Advent, the church opens its windows
as believers open their hearts
in expectation of Christ's coming.
Advent bids us to look out upon the world
and the many faces and places
where the Christ who comes meets us,
more often than not in neighbor and stranger.

For some, opening a window is our first encounter
with the world beyond the shelter of our homes,
the world where we are *sent* by God.

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What windows in your life
might you open to the world outside?

Day Two

What about the curtain?
What do you notice?
It seems to be in motion by some force unseen.
It must be a breeze that we see only by its effects.

Can you remember a time
when you longed to feel a breeze?
Nature's breath comes as gift.
We know not from whence it comes nor where
it goes,
so also with the Spirit.

In Advent, we heighten our attention to what
is unseen
because we believe the visible is never all
there is.
There is the material world,
like this window, the sill, the curtain.
And there is the invisible world
revealed by its wondrous mystery.
The two are woven into the Creator's design for life.

In Advent, we open ourselves to God's Holy Breeze
at work *in* us and *through* us
blowing healing and hope into the world.

Where might you discover the Breeze this Advent?
Into what places and relationships
might the Breeze be blowing you?
After all, this is the mystery of "God-with-us"
—all of us.

Day Three

What is *that* outside this window?
What does it look like to you?
However you name it,
there is more beyond, and beyond even that.

The tree outside is enough
to set us wondering and wanting to venture out.
Think about a time when you sat looking out a
window.
Did it make any difference
whether the window was closed or open,
whether you could "feel" the outside
calling to you inside,
calling you to come out and join the world?

In Advent, we *take time* to look out windows and
to notice.
As we *take notice*, we allow our imaginations to
run free.
After all, Advent is a season for the imagination.
And so, our minds enter the dance of
thoughtfulness
as we ponder the world around us,
God's place in it—and ours.

Advent intends to make us curious
about the world beyond our seeing,
and beyond our knowing,
and for that curiosity to become compassion.

Day Four

Some people close windows to shut out the noise.
But this window is open.
It is only a picture,
but we see it open to the planet,
inviting us to *hear with our eyes*.

Each of us knows a little something
about the world beyond the immediate outside.
We know that if we travel far enough
we will come to places of joy and laughter,
sorrow and sighing,
pain and suffering,
birthing and dying.

There are risks beyond the window,
that what we meet will trouble us.
And, if troubled, the conscience will ask us to act.
So it is safer to stay inside,
or so many conclude.
Those of an "inside" mind move about
insulated from human need.
This way of coping comes with a cost.
But the insulated
are more isolated than they can ever know;
isolated from God,
isolated from neighbor,
God, neighbor,
neighbor, God,
what is the difference?
For the God who came in Christ
continues coming in the broken and battered.
In Advent, we remember that to find God,
we look to join God among the "least of these."

Can you hear it,
the invitation,
from just outside the window?

Day Five

Do we *know* where this window stands open?
Yes we do.
Would you like to know?
The window looks out
upon hallowed ground stained with blood.
It's a Civil War battlefield, one of many;
its name is Shiloh.

Over two days in 1862 more than 23,000 died,
"one of the bloodiest battles in American history."

Much "history" has been made since,
in this country and the world,
much more death, soldiers and civilians both.

In Advent, we hear Isaiah's words
shattering our compulsion
to settle disputes by spilling blood.

"Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more."

The prophet's words lie waiting, as do we,
impatient with leaders whose actions deny their words,
incensed at those provoking rage over reason,
increasingly aware that we cannot help ourselves,
dangerously living at the edge
between hope and despair.
But still we sing, praying our way to renewed belief.
With tearful, fearful, longing hearts, we beseech God:

"O come, Desire of nations, bind
All peoples in one heart and mind;
Bid envy, strife and quarrels cease;
Fill the whole world with heaven's peace."

O Emmanuel,
may the persistent *what is* of this world
not prevent your promise of *what can be, will be.*

Day Six

The Battlefield, bathed in daylight,
owes its name to the church
in which the viewer stands,
and, perhaps, prays.

Consider: this house of worship
looks out upon a memory etched in time,
and a lesson not yet learned.

Even now, we are paying the price.
And so, the global debt continues to tally
each time minds refuse to meet,
turning neighbor *against* neighbor,
the will of the one
pitted against the unwilling of the other,
settling conflict by compelling submission.

In Advent, we "learn" from heart to head
the way of justice and mercy.
Such a "way" is made by the will yielding
to the heart,
a heart being converted from lesser loves
in devotion to God and neighbor above all else.
"Above all else," yes, 'tis where the heart belongs.

In Hebrew, Shiloh means "the one to whom it belongs."
The "one" and the "it" together in belonging,
is this not the heart's most fundamental longing?

To belong is to *have* a place of knowing and being known.
In Advent, this longing is spoken, sung, prayed, and gestured
without embarrassment.
We do not apologize for the need to belong,
nor our fumbling, despite missteps, to find it.

In Advent, belonging finds us with its holy
"with-ness,"
God "*with-us*,"
all of us, no exceptions.
This is the faith,
and we will take it to the grave and beyond:
"In life and death we *belong* to God."*
Hear this, all you, including those whose "dust"
is now dirt beyond the window.

*from A Brief Statement of Faith, *Book of Confessions*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

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Columns

On Liturgy: The Connectional Nature of Music

Erika Rembert Smith

For centuries, music has been an important practice for the community of faith. Miriam praised God with tambourines. Moses sang of God's faithfulness. Mary sang her song of praise. Jesus sang before breaking bread with his disciples. The psalmist called forth praise with the lyre and sounding trumpets. The writer of Ephesians exhorted the community of faith to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among themselves; to sing and make melody to the Lord in their hearts, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:19–20).

Music is a universal language that transcends time, space, and race. One does not need to speak the native tongue of a people to experience the transformational nature of a song. The tone of music transforms the atmosphere of a heart and a home. Its decibels deliver us from the despair of the day. Its high notes help us soar to heavenly heights. Its tones aid in tempering our moods and our attitudes. Music is able to lift us up when we are low, console us when we are confused, heal us when we are hurting, and excite us when we are discouraged. Music strengthens us, soothes us, and moves us closer to God. Perhaps, this reality undergirds the psalmist's invitation to all of creation to "sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth" (Ps. 96:1)!

As we hear the songs of faith, we are reminded that God is with us. As the antiphon fills the air, we are reminded of the awesome nature of God. As we sing of God's great love, we are reminded of the wideness of God's mercy. When we engage musically in worship, with instrument and with voice, the people of God lift high the God of our faith, proclaim the word that undergirds our faith, pray the prayers that sustain our faith, and declare the goodness and grace of God as a testimony to the faithfulness of God.

Music not only moves us closer to God, but also to one another. When we sing together, we are reminded that we are not alone in this life. As our voices connect, our hearts do, too. Through music we join one another in offering thanks for the many blessings of life, we encourage one another to hold on in hard times, and we push each other to be the people that God has called us to be.

Words annunciated and undergirded by musical notes connect us to the people of our day and to the saints of yesteryear. Through songs of faith, we are connected to the slave community, whose voice continues to speak—encouraging us to keep our hands to the plow and hold on just a little while longer in anticipation that everything will eventually be all right. The hymn "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" connects us with an eighteenth-century community experiencing a national crisis. We still hear Isaac Watts's reminder that God has been our help in ages past and God will be "our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home."[1] The nineteenth-century's "Go Down, Moses"[2] encourages us to take up the call to work for the freedom and justice of those living under the weight of oppression in our day. The twentieth-century's "Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus,"[3] published during the 1918 flu epidemic, speaks peace to us as we experience a pandemic in our day. How will today's song writers and composers speak to the people of tomorrow?

There are times when we can't find the words to say, and the vocalist who sings the anthem speaks for us. There are times when we can't find the words to pray, and the congregation singing the hymn prays

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the prayer on our behalf. There are times when the joy is unspeakable and the sorrow is unutterable, and a musical instrument expresses what is happening within us. When our words fail us, music will speak for us so that our concerns are communicated, our cares are heard, and our gladness is known in the company of God and the community.

Perhaps music's greatest gift is that it connects us to our God, each other, and our cultures. Because music encourages and connects us to one another, we would do well to expand our repertoire. Expanding our repertoire helps us to learn the language and culture of other people. It allows us the opportunity to explore the rich diversity created by God. Music reminds us of the multidimensional and multicultural nature of God and humanity. The diversity of music asserts that there is no one right way but there are many ways to convey the greatness of God. When we expand our musical range, we expand our view of life.

The diversity of music serves as a beautiful metaphor for the diversity of life. Just as there are different life experiences, there are different types of musical arrangements. In the same way, there are different ethnic and cultural communities, there are different forms of musical articulation. People possess varying levels of abilities, and in music there exists multiple forms of expression.

Music speaks to us in liturgy and in life. In the same way a musical bridge connects a chorus to a verse, music is connectional in nature. When the church gathers from north and south, east and west to be the people of God at General Assembly, in our local congregations or in any sacred space, we Presbyterians, and all followers of Jesus Christ, are united by the awesome majesty of music. As our nation becomes increasingly diverse, we, as Christians, would do well to embrace not only those who are different from us, but also to embrace a broader spectrum of music. Sticking with one style limits our ability to experience the vastness of God's creation. Music moves us closer to God. It inspires our faith. It fuels our witness. It motivates our service. Therefore, let us praise God with the sound of our instruments and "Lift Every Voice and Sing!"[4]

Notes

1. Isaac Watts, "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," 1708.
2. Henry Burleigh, "Go Down, Moses," 1917.
3. Helen Howarth Lemmel, "The Heavenly Vision (Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus)," first published in England as a pamphlet in 1918.
4. James Weldon Johnson, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," 1900.

On Music: Sing a New Song?

Marlon Hurst

> I sing a new song to you and the earth sings too
> I sing and my song blesses your unsayable name—
>
> Norman Fischer[1]

For those of us whose songs are inspired by Scripture thousands of years old, what does it mean to "sing a new song"? What exactly is a "new song"? Is it one that is recently composed, or one that is newly encountered regardless of the date of composition? Is there a church musician serving in a so-called "traditional" context who, when introducing an unfamiliar hymn to a congregation, has not heard the lament of the people, "Let us sing the OLD songs!"? And what of those serving in so-called "contemporary" contexts? Even here, is there not sometimes a longing for the familiar—the "heart songs"—that, in order to be so, cannot be precisely *new*? The psalmist didn't say, "Sing *only* new songs to the Lord," after all!

Perhaps there is a cue that we can take from the Prayer of Great Thanksgiving. In it, we remember the marvelous and mighty acts of God—what God *has* done; we give thanks for the redemption we have received through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—what God *is* doing; and we pray for the outpouring of God's Spirit upon us and the church as we look towards the in-breaking of God's reign upon the earth—what God *will yet* do. Might there be some merit in selecting worship music with an eye (and an ear!) towards a balance of *past, present, and future*?

In the early 1990s, I was serving as the musician for a congregation that, like many others during that decade, was wrestling with the balance of "traditional" and "contemporary" music in worship. During my tenure in this congregation, I encountered a little book titled *Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship* by Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger. In it, the authors presented a model for thinking about cultural change that they had first encountered in *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* by Edward Schillebeeckx. Akin to the tripartite structure of the Great Thanksgiving, the analysis of cultural history Schillebeeckx framed was as three concentric circles rotating on a single axis. The innermost circle is "Structural history: time span of centuries; almost bordering on non-movement." The middle circle is "Conjunctural history: more comprehensive; slower tempo of change." And the outermost circle is "Ephemeral history: brief and rapidly expiring."[2] Doran and Troeger apply this model to the music of the church by asking the following questions:

- Are we providing [music with] enough structural history to maintain the identity of our church?
- Are we being open enough to ephemeral history so that we can receive its refreshment and the new leading of the Spirit?
- Do we give adequate time for some of our innovations to become part of conjunctural history where we can see if they bear the test of repeated use?[3]

In considering these questions, one might imagine that churches whose music skews heavily towards the structural may be ill-equipped to discern the ongoing and fresh leading of God's Spirit, while churches whose music skews heavily towards the ephemeral may find themselves bereft of the life-giving, deep wells of our musical and theological grandparents in the faith, on whose shoulders we stand.

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Since its publication in 2013, I have found *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* to be a model of balance between structural music (hymns that have been and are still beloved by the ecumenical church), conjunctural music (perhaps pieces that were new in previous hymnals but that have since been adopted and beloved by many congregations), and ephemeral music (perhaps first published in *Glory to God*). With thought and care, one can richly populate a worship service with a balanced diet of hymns from *Glory to God* that provides nourishment from the best of our tradition, both old and new—up to a point.

Much has changed in our world and in our denomination since *Glory to God* was published. While many churches have widened their circles to more fully include our siblings in Christ from the LGBTQIA2S+ community, we have become increasingly aware of the ongoing pain of those who are structurally disenfranchised by gender and racial bias and discrimination; our country is more politically polarized than it has been in generations; and every day seems to present a new environmental crisis as our globe warms and its inhabitants suffer as a result. Who are the prophetic voices pointing the way forward in the face of these realities?

Among those voices is Kate Bluett, a Catholic hymn writer whose texts are steeped in Scripture while drawing connections to the issues of the day. Her 2020 hymn "Stones" responds particularly to Ezekiel 36:26 and Matthew 24:2, but was "strongly influenced by the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd."[4]

> Tear down the temples we have built;
> leave not a stone to stand.
> The whitened tombs with bodies filled,
> the bloodstained, thirsty sand:
> Tear down the monuments to guilt,
> and take your burning brand
> to purify our lips of filth
> and cleanse our sinful hands!"[5]

Keiko Ying is a classically trained cellist and a Presbyterian (PCA) church musician in Rochester, New York. She wrote the music for the ecological hymn "Hear the Song of Our Lament," which is featured on the 2020 album *Doxecology*, produced by the London-based collective Resound Worship.

> Oceans weep for beauty lost,
> and forests plead for your return,
> fields are drenched in tears and blood;
> all nature groans beneath sin's curse.
> *Have mercy, have mercy,*
> *have mercy on us, Lord.*
> *Renew us, restore us,*
> *have mercy on us, Lord.*[6]

In 2020, the Hymn Society published a collection titled *Songs for the Holy Other*, which "emerged from a desire to make . . . hymns by, for, or about the LGBTQIA2S+ community accessible to a wider range of congregations."[7] "God of Many Faces" by Amy Cerniglia, a Presbyterian church musician, is included in the collection.

> God of many genders,
> our world reflects you,
> sunrise and sunset
> uniting our hues,
> woven into a city
> with jewels of all shades,
> houses of ruby
> and walls rowed with jade.
> God of many names,
> we invite you to show
> us the new names
> that reflect our true souls.
> Breathe with your holy spirit
> to give us the Word
> that will in-dwell dry bones,
> granting new life once heard."[8]

Thanks be to God for continuing to speak to musicians, poets, and theologians so that together we may continue to be inspired to live into God's ever widening vision of love, acceptance, and grace.

Will we sing a new song? May it be so.

Notes

1. Norman Fischer, "Psalm 96," in *Opening to You: Zen-Inspired Translations of the Psalms* (New York: Penguin Group, 2002), 125.
2. Carol Doran and Thomas H. Troeger, *Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 119.
3. Doran and Troeger, 122–123.
4. Kate Bluett, email correspondence with the author, July 7, 2021.
5. Kate Bluett, "Stones," stanza 2, https://katebluett.home.blog/2020/08/27/stones. Kate Bluett's hymns are published on her blog at https://katebluett.home.blog/. Used by permission.

6. Kate Bluett, “Hear the Song of Our Lament,” stanza 2 and refrain, https://www.resoundworship.org/song/hear_the_song_of_our_lament/. More about Resound Worship and the *Doxecology* project can be found at https://resoundworship.org/. Keiko Ying’s creativity may be explored at https://keikoeying.wixsite.com/website. © Keiko Ying / Resound Worship copyrightmanager@jubilatehymns.co.uk. Used by permission.
7. The Hymn Society website, https://thehymnsociety.org/resources/songs-for-the-holy-other/, accessed August 21, 2021.
8. Amy Cerniglia, “God of Many Faces,” stanzas 2 and 3, *Songs for the Holy Other. Songs for the Holy Other* may be downloaded at https://thehymnsociety.org/resources/songs-for-the-holy-other/. Used by permission.

Kelly Rider

On Preaching

Stephen M. Fearing

Recently, I joined one of the elders of the congregation I serve to take communion to an elderly member in a nursing home. Because of the pandemic, I hadn't seen her in person for well over a year, and her condition had declined rapidly in the time since. We found her in her small room eating lunch, and she gave us a smile as we greeted her. I noticed she had lost some weight and her mobility had greatly diminished. As we sat down and began talking, it became clear to us that she struggled to speak coherently. She clearly knew what she wanted to say but her body wasn't cooperating. And so, the elder and I sat with her and did our best to catch what few words or phrases we could make out.

But we found other ways to connect. We held hands. We prayed. I showed her some pictures of my thirteen-month-old daughter, and she clapped her hands together in delight. But as we continued our time together, she became more agitated with her inability to communicate with us as she wished. I had always known her to be such an articulate person who loved to tell a good story, and both the elder and I could sense her frustration.

After we celebrated the Lord's Supper together, I began to collect my things. But the elder who accompanied me felt that something was missing. She gestured for me to sit back down and had the wisdom to suggest that we sing "Amazing Grace." As she began the first verse, the woman closed her eyes, smiled gently, and sang it with us, not missing a word. In that moment, I was reminded how the music of our faith embeds itself so deeply within our souls.

I'm sure there is no small number of pastors who could share similar stories. Those of us who are called to preach from the pulpit would do well to remember that the gospel isn't just preached by the pastor during the sermon; it's equally preached by the voices singing the hymns that have nurtured, comforted, and instructed us through the years.

I was recently selecting hymns for some upcoming worships services and I stumbled across "O Christ, the Great Foundation." As I sang through the hymn in my head, I was struck by the words of the third verse in particular. Written by Timothy T'ingfang Lew in 1933, the hymn calls the church to "attack the powers of sin . . . where tyrants' hold is tightened, where strong devour the weak, where innocents are frightened, the righteous fear to speak."[1] Talk about a hymn that doesn't beat around the bush!

We've been through the ringer these past few years. Economic disparity, racial injustice, a global pandemic, and a volatile political environment have taken their toll. But in these complex and challenging moments we have hymns like the one above to refocus us. And this hymn reminded me of another truth: while comforting us in the midst of turmoil is an important function of hymns, it is by no means the only one. Sometimes, hymns *unsettle* us. Their words are those of poets who paint a canvas using a palette of words and music to stir us from complacency and into the places where the powers of sin seem to have the final word.

What would it look like to preach a sermon series guided by hymns that challenge us? The preacher could, for example, invite the congregation to explore the many African American spirituals that served as songs of protest in the wake of racial injustice. Or they could explore the historical context of hymns like "O Christ, the Great Foundation" that, for example, compelled congregations to denounce tyranny as the Third Reich was consolidating its power. Perhaps, after we've been robbed for so long

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of the spiritual discipline of congregational singing, this is the perfect moment to remind ourselves of *why* that absence was so painful. Perhaps this is the time to revisit the mystery of how music can move us in ways that words alone can't.

When I was in seminary, I played in the handbell choir of Central Presbyterian Church in Atlanta. Their building is situated directly across the street from the state capitol building, where it wasn't uncommon for there to be protests whenever the state murdered one of its citizens through what is euphemistically called "capital punishment." On one of those days, we paused our handbell rehearsal, took several octaves of bells that formed a minor chord, and joined the protestors. There was singing and yelling, praying and crying. At the exact moment that a beloved child of God was killed, all voices stopped and each of us in the handbell choir randomly rang our bells; a sorrowful chord piercing the air as an act of liturgical lament.

Although I had never really been in favor of the death penalty, something clicked inside me that day as we rang those bells. I realized—no, I *felt*—that what was being done was a brutality some have the audacity to call justice. And it was music that brought me to that place. It was the holy sound of that minor chord that solidified something inside of me. Never more could I look away and pretend that this practice was justifiable in any way.

I wonder, when was a time that music *changed* you? And how can you use that testimony to inform your preaching? As preachers, we have the responsibility of speaking truth, even and especially when it's tough to hear. And how wonderful it is to know that the music of our faith is our companion in such a weighty endeavor! Let us pray that the congregations we preach to and with will continue to find new ways to ring the bells of justice and "sing a new world into being."[2]

Notes

1. From "O Christ, the Great Foundation," by Timothy T'ingfant Lew. Copyright 1977 Chinese Christian Literature Council Ltd.
2. Inspired by "Sing a New World into Being" by Mel Bringle. Copyright 2006 GIA Publications, Inc.

On the Arts

Amy E. Gray

In my last essay, I mentioned in passing that I do not connect deeply with visuals as a means of experiencing the divine. While this surprises some people "because I am a visual artist," my early experiences worshiping in a very plain Presbyterian church did not form visual connections. Instead, the tie that binds me to the church is music, though the way that connection manifests is not the way we usually think about music. Typically, we focus on the melodies, musical style, and of course the text, but this is not the source of my connection.

Some of my earliest musical memories are of being under a piano. My father would come home and play to unwind after work. I, with my stuffed animals and my baby blanket, would sit completely surrounded by the sound, feeling the music in every fiber of my body. Later, singing in various choirs, I preferred to sit towards the middle of the choir on the edge of my section where I could feel all of the parts. I sat front and center in the band, playing the bassoon. The sound of the whole group washed over me before it went out to the audience. Years later I bought a harp, an instrument that requires the player to embrace the instrument and feel the sound. I realized I was not just listening, I was feeling the music.

But it wasn't until I was well into adulthood that I truly understood that I was tuning into the physical sensation of the music as part of my prayer process. It now makes much more sense to me that I have always considered choir rehearsal a part of the worship experience. Yet there is more to it than just the experience of the choir. It is the magic of congregational song that holds the highest resonance. It is a whole room full of people breathing together as one entity that truly makes Sunday morning special— into worship. This is the deep connection that has bound me to choir, and prayer. It is not just the singing of great music with important texts in a choir but the deep, experiential resonance of congregational singing.

In the past I have found it difficult to describe this connection to other people. Part of the challenge may be that we are not as likely to talk about the experience of the singer when singing. Instead, we focus on the recipient of the song hearing the melody and text. Since COVID, that has changed. As the world shut down, we lost that experiential sensory connection in all its forms. Even those who were not necessarily paying attention to sensory information noticed that something intangible was missing.

I have to take a moment and applaud all of those who put in unnumbered extra hours to produce virtual worship even when they had never thought of doing it before. It was an amazing effort on such short notice. Choir directors put in a huge amount of energy not only to manage recording soloists and later virtual choirs, but in recording hours of practice recordings for each voice in the choir. Individual choir members recorded their own voices and sent them to be blended into the virtual choir. Eventually, individuals were asked to send videos providing a visual connection to the choir. (Thank them again when you get the chance.) Feedback from the congregation was overwhelmingly positive.

While all of this could be done, it also illuminated the edges of its limitations. Some found connection and solace in participating in the virtual format. It was not the same, but it

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provided a needed task on which to focus and weekly Zoom meetings to get some social time. For some, the virtual format provided a great support through the pandemic crisis. For others this was a greater challenge than gift. Large Zoom meetings are not ideal for more intimate conversations. Learning music from recordings lacking the sensory data of hearing other voices created an unfamiliar learning situation. The process of recording one's own voice revealed vocal flaws not normally "visible" in regular rehearsals. From the standpoint of process this invited perfectionism into rehearsal in ways that it had not been before. It transitioned rehearsal time from the experience of learning the music to an assignment to create a product in a timely fashion. While, again, I want to affirm the product as important and amazingly helpful to many, I want to note that for some the change in process broke the bond between spirit and body.

Now as we're returning to worship together, I wonder how the choir will come back together after this time of being apart. As I write this, choirs are singing in various configurations of masked and distanced. Indoor congregational song may be back eventually. Summer is coming to an end and rehearsals are beginning. What lessons learned from the virtual format will linger in the choir room even as choirs begin to rehearse together? Those who participated in the virtual mode now have a bond that those who stepped away will not have.

Because the virtual choir was not helpful for me, I stepped away from choir and focused on resuming instruments that I had stopped playing. While I don't breathe with anyone else when playing the harp, I do wrap myself around the instrument in the act of playing. Even just tuning and playing scales I can feel the vibrations in my chest. Years ago, when I began to play the harp, I made the connection between tuning and prayer through the simple process of tuning in to the vibrations, making small adjustments to get the pitch aligned. Sometimes I am high, sometimes low. Rarely am I without need for daily adjustments. I don't know when I'll be ready to return to choir and face-to-face church and reemerge from my musical solitude. But I do hope more people will find the space to acknowledge the practice of stepping into that vibrational space, and not just read the words.

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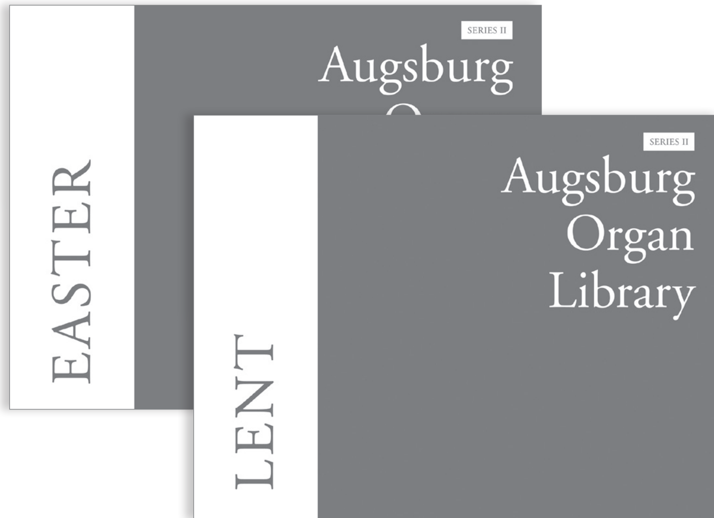

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