

International Song Leaders Conference in Washington DC, May 18-20, 2007

SMALL CHURCH – BIG WORSHIP

By Mark Haven Hoyle

Intro:

- How many of you are in small churches or regions (50-100 members)?
- I won't question your love for music or singing, but how important do you think worship music is for your church?
- Think your small church limits your opportunities? Think again!

POINT #1 – Small Church, Big Need

My church has suffered from an identity crisis. Maybe your church has, too. In Wichita, we've asked ourselves, "What do we stand for? What are we going to make of ourselves?" Taking ownership and responsibility for your church is not something that comes easily, especially when you leaned heavily on a larger church for direction in the past. Your small church has a big need.

Do you feel responsible for making the singing in your church great?

The typical order of service:

- 90 minutes long = Welcome (5 min), contribution (5 min), communion (10 min), sermon (25-40 min), announcements (5 min), and 8 or 9 songs (30 min)
- Congregational singing takes up nearly as much time as the sermon and can take up 1/3 to 1/2 of the entire worship service
- Singers and musicians usually require extra practices; they put in more time than all others except the minister for any given week
- Congregational singing is unique – **It's the only act of worship where everyone participates equally.** If you and Jon Augustine stood side-by-side worshipping God in song together, God would listen for your participation instead of your voice (although I think it's unfair that God gave Jon all the vocal talent).

Do you view singing/music as a filler or as a ministry?

1 Chronicles 6: 31-32

These are the men David put in charge of the music in the house of the LORD after the ark came to rest there. 32 They ministered with music before the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, until Solomon built the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem. They performed their duties according to the regulations laid down for them.

- The music was a highly important and organized event for David
- With music came structure, duties, and even expectations
- David treated music like it was a ministry! Why? How come?

1 Chronicles 15:11-16 (preparing to move the ark)

Then David summoned Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. 12 He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place I have prepared for it. 13 It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way." 14 So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. 15 And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD.

16 David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brothers as singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals.

- The Levites had the very serious task of moving the ark of God. Remember they messed up the first time and one of them got killed.

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- So why did David ask for joyful music this time? (they were afraid, lacked faith, and needed encouragement)

This situation is not unlike the story of our movement of churches. We've advertised that our movement began in 1979 in Boston (the honeymoon phase), and we experienced tremendous growth over the first 15 years (like giving birth to many children); then church growth slowed and relationships between churches/leaders became strained (the age of innocence ended, teenage years emerged); soon we began reaping the decisions we made as a movement that were not from God and our foundation was shaken (the ark was dropped).

Today we stand ready to lift the ark onto our shoulders again, **but we need music!** Your church needs music and you need to bring it to them so joy can fill everyone's heart! It's your responsibility.

Whether you wear the title of 'deacon of worship' or not, start developing a good relationship with your minister

Hopefully, by now you're feeling excited about your churches music potential. There's just one obstacle – the minister! Perhaps there are multiple "obstacles". Here's my advice:

1. share your desires – good relationships are built on honest communication; your "honest" feelings do matter, but don't leave out prayer
2. prove to your minister that you can be trusted; earn your wings
3. faithfully and productively serve in this critical area; the one with 5 talents goes out and gains 5 more

POINT #2 – Small Church, Big Difference

Do you ever have quiet times as a songwriter? - Express your relationship with God thru lyrics

- **Didactic songs composed by Moses, celebrating the providence, righteousness, and judgments of God in Psalm 90**
- **Mary's song in Luke 1:46-55**
- **David's music and many other songwriters - the Psalms**

A couple of years ago I started writing congregational music for church. Then my friend Gerri Bernitt came to me with a song she had written some 15 years ago. By this point I had learned to compose music on my computer (like you see in the songbook) so I composed her song. On Easter of 2006 our choir performed her song, but it wasn't her happiest moment. You see, in my enthusiasm, I strayed away from her original idea and added my ideas without her consent. I apologized and rewrote it exactly the way she wanted. We are going to perform this song tonight. This was a good test for our relationship. We grew closer thru songwriting!

Shortly after that I asked my buddy Rob Milner to write a song, too. Little did I know that he was going thru some pretty tough times financially. Writing a song was a faith-building experience for him and a month later he approached me with a funky gospel tune called He's On Time. The words describe his faithful response to his situation.

It's been great to see how different our songwriting styles are. We hold regular practices and give feedback to each other on our songs. This has developed a great deal of trust and camaraderie amongst us. Our church is receiving our music with much enthusiasm because they know it's from our hearts.

Recently another one of our sisters started up a gospel ensemble group. Disciples in Wichita are standing for something; we are identifying ourselves by our own music. We recognize that music is a ministry (for us and for the lost).

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1) lyre, 2) zither, 3) harp, 4) lute

Can adding musical instruments help a worship service, or not?

19 The musicians Heman, Asaph and Ethan were to sound the bronze cymbals; 20 Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah and Benaiah were to play the lyres according to alamoah , [d] 21 and Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom, Jeiel and Azaziah were to play the harps, directing according to sheminith . [e] 22 Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skillful at it.

- What is your skill and how are you contributing?
- Did you know that 40% of the box office movie experience is the music and sound effects

There are members in your church right now that can take your music ministry to a new level – like a lamp being plugged into the wall socket (here are some examples):

1. A couple of years ago one of my good friends and brother-in-Christ went thru a divorce. His wife left him and left the church. He was devastated. He was completely out of sorts, and simply needed something to do. About that time I purchase some used congas and he immediately took interest. He started playing regularly with me (a guitar player) and our bass player. It was clear that this little 3-piece worship band was his catalyst to confidence and joy. He felt valued by us and, therefore, secure with God.
2. Last fall I visited Manhattan, KS. (a church numbering 35-40) to help them with their praise and worship. There was a sister who was particularly quiet, but she knew how to play piano. She immediately found purpose in her new role as an accompanist and practiced regularly with excitement!
3. A few months ago the Tulsa, OK church asked me to come down and teach a guitar class. 10 people showed up from this 85-90 member church including a 9 year old boy. They are now learning church songs with the guitar.
4. Two of our sisters wrote our Christmas play last December and another sister wrote our Easter cantata this year.

It's so important to find ways to plug people in.

Treat the music in your church like its a ministry and you will be inspired to:

- grow out of your one-dimensional acapella worship experience
 1. Think about your church and your city, then ask yourself, "What kind of worship music will help EVERYONE connect with God?"
 - Some have an acapella-only background
 - Some have a traditional gospel background
 - Some love Christian radio
 - Some churches include the preteens and children in church part of the time

Become all music to all people!

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- network with other music leaders in other churches
1. What things have you done to get people to connect with God?
 - no sound-system Sunday
 - quick sharing of scriptures about worshipping thru song
 - reading the lyrics to a song before singing it
 - quick prayer to God to remind everyone to connect while singing
 - playing background music while having a couple of folks read scriptures
 - having live instrumental music by those who are skillful at it
 - leading a children's song and having the kids stand while the parents sit (make it fun rather than embarrassing for them)
 - having the choir sing while playing a video clip from a spiritual movie
 - sharing the history behind the song (this will require you to do a Google search, but it really helps your church) – **ex. It Is Well With My Soul**



Horatio G. Spafford (1828-1888)
Courtesy of [American Colony Hotel](#)

Words: [Horatio G. Spafford](#), 1873.

Music: [Philip P. Bliss](#), 1876 ([MIDI](#), [score](#)). The tune is named after the ship on which Spafford's children perished, the *S.S. Ville de Havre*. Ironically, Bliss himself died in a tragic train wreck shortly after writing this music.

This hymn was written after two major traumas in Spafford's life. The first was the great Chicago Fire of October 1871, which ruined him financially (he had been a wealthy businessman). Shortly after, while crossing the Atlantic, all four of Spafford's daughters died in a collision with another ship. Spafford's wife Anna survived and sent him the now famous telegram, "Saved alone." Several weeks later, as Spafford's own ship passed near the spot where his daughters died, the Holy Spirit inspired these words. They speak to the eternal hope that all believers have, no matter what pain and grief befall them on earth.



Philip P. Bliss (1838-1876)

POINT #3 – Small Church, Big Family

When I was a kid my dad would have regular family slide shows. It was an EVENT:

- mom would make the popcorn and dad would get out the slide pictures
- today we need to create the same memories with our church family

"They [Hobaiah, Hakkoz and Barzillai] searched for their family records, but they could not find them and so were excluded from the priesthood as unclean." [Ezra 2:62](#)

Listen to ideas and the feedback that come from your church. Most non-musical worshippers really appreciate when you apply their ideas. It helps them connect with God.

- Today's churches are utilizing technology (i.e. big screen projectors, bands, choirs, movies, etc.) These can be very good investments.
- Part of winning souls to Christ is teaching them how to worship; so we must begin by teaching our churches how to worship more effectively!

FINALLY: Our movement once defined itself by commitment (we are sold-out disciples of Jesus); today we need to stand on the front line and teach our 'sold-out' disciples how to worship and connect with God more passionately. Amen!