

LESSON 12

LET MY PEOPLE SING

Introduction

"Lighting one candle puts out the darkness." You may feel overwhelmed and powerless as our journey nears completion. You have been challenged to broaden your biblical and theological understanding of music and worship and to improve your practice as a planner and implementor of worship experiences. It is my hope on the final part of our journey to encourage you "to change what you can, to accept what you can't change, and to know the difference between the two." The difference which you can make is equivalent to dispelling darkness by the lighting of one candle. You are invited to join with me in celebrating your own uniqueness within God's plan for the redemption of the world through His Church. There is no better way to celebrate than by reliving the joy which continues to enrich our lives in the act of congregational singing.

From the dawn of Christianity to the present generation hymn singing has been a prominent part of Christian worship practices. It is found in congregations of all sizes, races and colour where there is singing and sharing in worship and witness. In the Preamble to *Building an Effective Music Ministry* the following description highlights the centrality of congregational singing in church music.

Church music is congregations singing and sharing in worship and witness. Hymn singing creates community. It brings together people of all age levels, people of different origins, people of varied cultural, economic, social and educational backgrounds.

Congregational singing brings the witness of the past into the reality of the present.

Congregational singing is the celebration of the presence of God's spirit and God's work in the world.

Congregational singing helps believers come into a new understanding of freedom in Christ through singing the gospel of Christ.

Congregational singing is experiencing the excitement of life-changing power in the words and music of the songs.

Singing has been a prominent part of Christian worship practices since the _____ of _____.

(dawn, Christianity)

Congregational singing brings understanding that illuminates the minds of seeking people. . . strength that lifts the hands of believing people. . . inspiration that opens the hearts of all people.¹

Congregational singing, therefore, ministers to all people in their various conditions, states and stages of life. It would be difficult to overestimate the value of effective congregational hymn singing in Free Church worship practices. Approximately one-third of principal worship services is normally devoted to music.

My approach to this expression of jubilation at the end of our journey will be twofold. First, you will be reminded of the importance of congregational singing in worship. On the one hand, evangelical hymn singing can easily be taken for granted. On the other hand, singing may be enjoyable because of the pleasure it brings to the congregation or the spirit of unity and fellowship that is inspired by group participation. However, there are definite reasons for the importance and invaluable contributions of meaningful congregational singing.

Secondly, practical suggestions will be given for improving congregational singing. As worship leaders realize how important hymn singing is to worship, they should be led to examine ways in which the singing in their church might be improved. This kind of reflection should consist of deeper understanding of hymns as well as the many ways in which hymns can be used in worship.

The Importance of Congregational Hymn Singing in Worship

Congregational singing is by far the most important aspect of church music. While choirs, instrumentalists, soloists and ensembles are important to worship, congregational singing should be the central part of a church's music programme.

Martin Luther brought about the Protestant Reformation on the wings of congregational song in the vernacular of the common people. One of Luther's Ninety-Five Theses was to the effect that common people should be allowed to participate in the worship services through the medium of singing. Therefore, Luther gave the German people a hymnbook (1524) in order that God might speak directly to them not only in His Word but that they also might respond to Him through their

Congregational singing ministers to people of _____

(all, ages)

The most important aspect of _____ music is congregational _____.

(church, singing)

Luther used congregational _____ to aid the Protestant _____.

(singing, Reformation)

¹ William J. Reynolds, *Building an Effective Music Ministry* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1980), p. 9

songs. The singing by German congregations became known in England as "an infectious frenzy of sacred song." Cardinal Cajatan is reputed to have said: "By his songs he (Luther) has conquered us." And another said: "The whole people is singing itself into this Lutheran doctrine." One should note, however, that Luther was a lover of art and had high regard for the quality as well as the quantity of music produced.

Congregational singing, as it is known today, did not develop until the nineteenth century. The hymns of Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley greatly extended the dimensions of Christian song because of their evangelical emphasis. Watts is credited with the triumph of the hymn in English worship. Charles Wesley reportedly wrote over six thousand hymns and Watts, six hundred. The power of the sung message prompted R.W. Dale to perhaps over-react saying: "Let me write the hymns and music of the church, and I care very little who writes the theology."² In addition to the Wesleyan revival in England, the Great Awakening and the frontier revivals in America all resulted in the tradition of congregational singing which churches enjoy today.

Congregational hymn singing is of vital importance to today's worship practices as E.O. Sellers indicates:

It gives the greatest possible number of people an opportunity to express themselves: it is a physical and a psychic preparation for the impression of divine truth; it is commanded by the Scriptures — "Let all the people sing;" it is set forth in the realm of sacred and Christian history, just as in social or military life, as God's most wonderful gift and effective motivating agency.³

If the melody is attractive and the supporting harmony not too difficult, congregational singing can be infectious. Since the singing appeals to the congregation, their pulse rate increases and the Spirit of God uses hymn singing to quicken the apprehension of divine truth. Therefore, the church's singing should be emotionally earnest, educationally elevating and efficiently useful in the worship of God. As Sellers continues:

A revival of congregational singing will remove indifference, will fuse hearts that differ,

² R.W. Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching Delivered at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1952), p. 271.

³ Ernest O. Sellers, *How to Improve Church Music* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1928), p. 38.

Two contributors to the development of the Christian hymn were _____ and _____.

(Isaac, Watts, Charles, Wesley)

Congregational singing is of vital importance in _____ worship practices.

(today's)

will dispel worldliness, arouse Christlike service, will build up and comfort saints and convert sinners.⁴

Certainly Sellers recognizes that these results from heart-felt singing come through the work of the Holy Spirit in the gift of song.

Over half a century ago I.E. Reynolds presented eight reasons which indicate the importance and value of congregational hymn singing. These insightful statements are as follows:

1. It is the Bible way. We have reason to believe that it was practiced by the children of Israel and also by the early Christians from the time of Christ.

2. It is a means of giving expression to the feelings of the inmost soul through songs of praise, thanksgiving, adoration, prayer, encouragement, exhortation, sorrow, etc.

3. It is the one part of divine worship in which everyone can take an active part, and experience has proved that if the people are not allowed the privilege of singing together, decay sets in at once, interest is lost in the service and a general decline is experienced.

4. Its value in reformations and revivals of the past and present; for instance, as used by Luther in the Reformation, the Wesleys in founding Methodism, Jonathan Edwards in the New England revival, Moody and Sank-ey in America and England, Torrey and Alexander and others in present day evangelism.

5. Its unifying effect upon the congregation as a whole. Congregations are made up of units or individuals, each separate and distinct from the others in disposition, temperament, etc. Nothing will so quickly and completely weld them into one composite whole as a good rousing congregational song.

6. It prepares the preacher for the delivery of his sermon. He is inspired to greater efforts if just before he arises to preach the congregation has joined in singing a good gospel song that has a message in it. As Dr. Lorenz so well says in his "Practical Church Music,"

_____ reasons that indicate the importance and value of congregational hymn singing were given by I.E.

(Eight, Reynolds)

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

"While the song is preparing the congregation for the preacher, it is also preparing the preacher for the congregation."

7. It reacts upon the singers themselves and affects them in a musical, psychological and spiritual way, thus preparing each individual for the message in the Word of God and in the sermon which is to follow. It edifies and uplifts those who are already Christians and awakens those who are lost to their condition, stirs their emotions, stimulates their will-power and helps them to act according to their convictions.

8. It often dignifies the more simple songs. That is, songs which are thought to be nothing more than jingle both in words and music are taken up and sung in such a way by a great congregation as to give them strength and dignity and prove very helpful in unifying the people.⁵

One should note that congregational singing does not depend upon an organization for its promotion, not upon the selection of a specific hymnbook and not entirely upon a competent song leader. But it does depend upon a recognition of its value and a sincere desire on the part of the congregation to sing.

Congregational singing provides for a united response to the gospel. Hymnody is closely related to Scripture either by quoting it directly or expressing one's interpretation of it. Erik Routley states: "A hymn is an opportunity for a congregation to declare its experience in Christian doctrine corporately."⁶ He also says that this opportunity for making worship exciting through meaningful hymn singing unfortunately can become quite dull and dreary:

The glory of our hymnody is in its power for converting unbelief, strengthening faith, and binding together the Christian community in that disciplined charity of which singing together is the symbol. The shame of our hymnody is in unreality, complacency, and spiritual slovenliness.⁷

The only indispensable music in evangelical worship is meaningful congregational singing. Luther affirmed: "If any would not sing and talk of what Christ has wrought for us, he shows thereby

⁵ I.E. Reynolds, *A Manual of Practical Church Music* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1923), pp. 77,78.

⁶ Erik Routley, *Hymns Today and Tomorrow* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 18.

⁷ Erik Routley, *Hymns and Human Life* (London: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1953), p. 307.

State two things that congregational singing depends upon.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Congregational singing provides for a _____ response to the gospel.

(united)

Is the following statement true or false?

Choirs and other special music groups are to be desired over the use of congregational singing in today's Christian worship. _____

(false)

that he does not really believe."⁸ God places a song in the believer's heart to be used for His glory.

Since the Reformation period, congregational singing has given added vitality and life to worship. John Wilson describes the ministry of congregational song as ingoing, outgoing and upreaching.

Congregational singing is an inward expression of "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" (Eph. 5:19). Even though we sing with others, its most significant meaning is to the individual person. The value of congregational singing is that even a person who is not capable of singing with great musical skill can gain inspiration, comfort and joy. Congregational singing also has an outward direction. The many hymns and gospel songs of testimony give opportunity for the Christian to share his faith with others. In Colossians 3:16 we are encouraged to go about "teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." In singing together believers can encourage, admonish, and inspire one another. . . .

Another important dimension of congregational singing is the upward experience. The apostle Paul encourages us to be "singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). The psalmist often expressed his praise to God. We too can find much joy as Christians in our expression of praise and adoration to God.⁹

If the motivation of a people's heart is right, then the Lord will hear their innermost expressions, whether they have beautifully trained voices or stammering tongues.

A recent development in congregational singing has been the addition of gospel choruses. Initially these songs were used in youth and fellowship meetings. Numerous churches make wide use of choruses, especially on Sunday evening. Gospel choruses have distinct advantages and disadvantages. This "trade off" may be presented in the following manner.

⁸ Walter E. Buszin, *Luther on Music* (St. Paul: North Central Publishing Company, 1958), p. 6. Quoted in Donald P. Hustad *Jubilate!* (Carol Stream: Hope Publishing Company, 1981), p. 243.

⁹ John F. Wilson, *An introduction to Church Music* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), pp. 120,21. Quoted in Paul W. Wohlgenuth, *Rethinking Church Music*, revised ed. (Carol Stream: Hope Publishing Company, 1981), pp. 90,91.

John Wilson describes the ministry of congregational song as _____, _____ and _____.
(ingoing, outgoing, upreaching)

In congregational singing we speak to _____.
(ourselves)

Congregational singing also has an _____ direction.
(outward)

According to Paul, we are to sing to the _____.
(Lord)

A recent development in congregational singing has been the addition of _____.
(gospel, choruses)

1. *Advantages.* Gospel choruses are very effective in new work where there may be no hymnbooks and very limited musical leadership. They are very popular with children and young people, although adults also enjoy singing them. Choruses, on the whole, contain the element of joy in the Lord. They are useful in stimulating fellowship and Christian love. The fact that they are usually very short and simple makes them easy to learn and retain. The message is usually one principal thought.

2. *Disadvantages.* Gospel choruses lack the majesty and dignity of the great hymns. While the aspect of joy is important to Christian worship, choruses lack the depth of hymns. One must recognize that the texts of hymns in hymnbooks have been scrutinized for their doctrinal content. Choruses with questionable doctrine can easily creep into the song service. While children enjoy choruses, not all of them are appropriate for children because of the symbolism that is beyond their comprehension. There is more to the Christian experience than joy. Hymns speak to every human emotion through the medium of music and poetry. Furthermore, the Christian faith has a great heritage. To sing choruses to the exclusion of hymns is to overlook the great teachings of the Church over the years. There is also the temptation to eliminate hymns altogether in favour of gospel choruses. To do this would have a tragic effect upon worship. The element of joy would become superficial eventually, and the church would lack the dynamic Christian instruction that comes from singing the great hymns of the Christian faith.

The wise use of gospel choruses has a place in Christian worship. However, the principal worship service should be joyful, but serious and dignified. Ministers must accept the responsibility for making hymn singing alive and meaningful to their congregations.

The emphasis thus far has been on the corporate action of congregational singing as a unifying and edifying force within the church. When this experience of worship is positive and uplifting, many things come together which may be taken for granted. It may be helpful to take a closer look at the collaborative artfulness of congregational singing which involves many component parts.

Improving Congregational Singing

The quality of a church's congregational singing may be determined in part by the hymns that are sung. Routley has suggested that "good

What advantages are there to the use of gospel choruses in worship services?

(Compare your answers with the text.)

List disadvantages to the use of gospel choruses in worship services.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The wise use of gospel choruses has a _____ in Christian worship.

(place)

hymns are those that are well written, well chosen and well sung."¹⁰ This statement could also characterize "good" congregational singing.

During the era of the Wesleys, considerable concern was expressed regarding the manner in which congregations were singing hymns. In the Preface to "Sacred Melody," 1761, John Wesley gives the following instructions for congregational singing:

1. Learn these tunes before you learn any others; afterwards learn as many as you please.
2. Sing them exactly as they are printed here, without altering or mending them at all; and if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.
3. Sing all. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.
4. Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep, but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sang the songs of Satan.
5. Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony, but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound.
6. Sing in time. Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices, and more therewith as exactly as you can; and take care not to sing too slow. This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy; and it is high time to drive it out from among us as quick as we did at first.
7. Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the

John Wesley gave instructions for _____

(congregational, singing)

¹⁰ Erik Routley, *Hymns and Human Life* (London: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1953), p. 299.

sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve of here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.¹¹

Wesley's advice would be equally pertinent to congregational singing in evangelical churches of the present generation.

John Curwen brought to light several interesting comments regarding the improvement of congregational singing from the Minutes of the Conferences of Methodist Churches.

From the Minutes of 1763

What can be done to make the people sing true? (1) Learn to sing true yourselves. (2) Recommend the tunes everywhere. (3) If a preacher cannot sing himself, let him choose two or three persons in every place to pitch the tunes for him. (Note: Most Methodist singing was unaccompanied.)

From the Minutes of 1765

Teach them to sing by note and to sing our tunes first; take care they do not sing too slow. Exhort all that can in every congregation to sing. Set them right that sing wrong. Be patient herein.

From the Minutes of 1768

Beware of formality in singing, or it will creep upon us unawares. "Is it not creeping in already," said they, "by these complex tunes which it is scarcely possible to sing with devotion?" Such is "Praise the Lord, ye blessed ones"; such the long quavering hallelujahs annexed to the morning song tune, which I defy any man living to sing devoutly. The repeating the same word so often, as it shocks all common sense, so it necessarily brings in dead formality, and has no more religion in it than a Lancashire hornpipe. Besides that, it is a flat contradiction to our Lord's command, "Use not vain repetitions." For what is vain repetition, if this is not? What end of devotion does it serve? Again, do not suffer the people to sing too slow. This naturally tends to formality, and is brought in by those who have very strong or very weak voices. Is it not possible that all

¹¹ James Lightwood, *Hymn-Tunes and Their Story* (London: The Epworth Press, 1923), pp. xix-xx. Quoted in William J. Reynolds and Milburn Price, editors, Second ed. *A Joyful Sound* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978), p. 48.

the Methodists in the nation should sing equally quick?¹²

Regardless of its form, style, or medium, all honest congregational singing should communicate spiritual truth.

Music and worship should be united in a strong theological perspective. The development of congregational hymn singing must be based upon solid biblical concepts as the following observations indicate.

1. The music should speak the feelings and thoughts of true worshippers of the present generation. The texts must be realistically related to life as experienced by the congregation.

2. The music should express universal truth and individual emotions. Both the text and the music should inspire a richer quality of spiritual living.

3. The greatness of the music should suggest the greater majesty of God.

4. The music should heighten new insights and visions as well as fresh approaches to God.

5. The composer and congregation should assume moral responsibility for the creative integrity and excellence of skill in presenting the Word of God through music.

People differ as to their concepts of congregational singing. In some cases hymn singing is dull and monotonous — lacking in energy and vitality; at the other extreme is the loud, so called “happy” singing without any pause between stanzas, too fast for the message to be understood. “Hearty singing” is often taken to be the ideal. Tunes are chosen because they are well-known and liked by the congregation. Unfamiliar hymns are usually met with deathly silence by the congregation. But loud, careless singing is not devotional. Vigour and vivacity may indeed induce physical and emotional stimulation, but this kind of stimulation is not the goal of congregational singing. Neither is loudness nor lack-luster singing any more to be desired. Worshipful singing should be joyful, reverent and fervent. One should not confuse devotional joy with secular enjoyment even though both include a degree of pleasure.

In the final analysis, congregational singing should possess a religious character. Joseph Ashton explains further what is meant by the religious character of hymns.

¹² John Spencer Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music* (London: J. Curwen & Sons, 1880), p. 12. Quoted in Reynolds and Price, *A Joyful Sound*, pp. 49,50.

Congregational singing should communicate

(spiritual, truth)

What are five things to base congregational singing upon?

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Congregational singing should possess a

(religious, character)

Congregational singing should have animation and spirit, but this spirit and animation should be of a religious character.

In its emotional character, worship is distinctly reflective. Religion, always having much that is contemplative, reflective and volitional, tends by its very nature to be more intense in its inward feeling than in its outward expression. Not all hymns should be sung in a bright, sprightly way, for religion has many moods. Music should aid in their attaining inspiring expression. In hymns of praise there should be joyousness and dignity, and in hymns of prayer, the sense of humility and of trust and confidence in the Divine. To blend joyousness and dignity in hymns of praise and the sense of humility and sustaining trust in hymns of prayer is a goal not always easy of attainment. Perception of the spiritual character and temper of hymns is the true guide in their interpretation in song.¹³

Therefore, it is highly desirable that congregational singing should be flexible and adaptable to the different moods and goals for the service.

Churches are usually selective regarding the hymns they sing. Those who sing all the hymns in the hymnbook are few indeed. Out of the three to six hundred hymns to be found in a standard hymnal, the congregation probably knows one to two hundred hymns at the very most. Each church tends to develop its own hymnary — a body of hymns and tunes with which the congregation is made intimately familiar. Such a collection of religious poetry and music should be developed consistently by worship leaders. Their repertoire should include the standard hymns and gospel songs that are universally accepted as well as newer worthwhile hymns with contemporary texts and tunes.

Worship leaders who ask the congregation to sing new hymns without prior preparation are asking for rejection. Unless the congregation is in some way conditioned to the music of a new song, music directors will tend to believe that the congregation does not like the selection and, therefore, will be reluctant to present the hymn again. The truth is that people like the familiar and reject the unfamiliar. People feel more secure with the known than with the unknown. Whenever a member of the congregation states regarding

Define hymnary.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Worship leaders who ask the congregation to sing new hymns without _____ preparation are asking for _____.

(prior, rejection)

¹³ Joseph N. Ashton, *Music in Worship* (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 1943), p. 121.

hymns, "I know what I like," in reality that person is saying "I like what I know." Worship leaders should recognize this fact and use common sense in planning for the presentation of unfamiliar hymns. The following outline is one suggested method for presenting new songs.

1. New tunes should be used as preludes, offertories and postludes for at least two weeks to one month prior to using the hymn with the congregation.

2. The choir director should teach the new hymn to members of all choirs and musical groups prior to presenting it to the congregation.

3. The hymn should be used with the educational organizations and at the mid-week services prior to the Sunday it is to be sung in church.

4. The music director should tell what he or she knows about the hymn that would stimulate the congregation's interest in the words and the music.

5. The hymn should be presented first in the informal service on a Sunday evening. The hymn could then be used the following Sunday morning.

6. Upon presenting the hymn have the accompanist play the hymn all the way through or have the choir sing one stanza to refresh the congregation's memory. By this time the congregation will have lost some of the fear in attempting to sing a new hymn.

Hymns of a seasonal nature may not have the benefit of lengthy preparation time. In these cases the music leader must alert and train the church choir and instrumentalists to lead the singing in a more dynamic manner. One should have at least the benefit of a mid-week rehearsal of seasonal hymns.

If hymn numbers are to be announced at all, they should be announced correctly. The worship leader should announce the number clearly and distinctly without looking down at the hymnbook. His eye contact should be with the congregation. The number should be repeated for the benefit of those who might not have heard it the first time. In announcing the number one should refer to the "hymn number" rather than the "page number." Page numbers refer to all the pages in the book beginning with the very first sheet in the hymnal; therefore, page numbers are different from hymn numbers and should not be referred to in this context.

In announcing hymn numbers above one hundred, the word "and" should be omitted. For example, "one hundred thirty" rather than "one hundred and thirty" which indicates that the congregation is to sing both hymns, "one hundred" and "thirty."

List six things a music leader can do to introduce new hymns to the congregation.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Hymn numbers are to be announced _____.

(correctly)

Another confusing matter is regarding the use of the terms "verses and stanzas." One should recognize that hymns are poetry and as such, unless the poetry is free verse, they are organized into sections of equal and regular structure known as stanzas. A stanza is a division of a hymn consisting of a series of lines arranged together in a recurring pattern of meter and rhyme. One should remember that the word "hymn" refers to the text. When referring to the music the correct terminology is the "hymn tune."

One possible explanation for the confusion that exists between the terms "stanza" and "verse" might be because chapters of the Bible are divided into verses. Although one of the secondary definitions of verse makes it synonymous with stanza, the first and more precise meaning of a "verse" refers to one line of poetry. Therefore, when referring to divisions of a hymn, worship leaders should use the term "stanza" rather than "verse."¹⁴

The congregation should be trained to recognize that hymn texts are poetry and should be read as such. *The Baptist Hymn Book*, published in Great Britain, sets the words in poetic form under the music of the hymn. The reason for this separation is to guarantee that the hymn will be read as poetry. Word editions of hymnals also have this advantage. Musicians, however, usually prefer having the text between the staves of hymns in order that words and music might be seen as a whole.

Since hymns are poetry, each stanza forms a part of this whole. Worship leaders should use discretion in eliminating stanzas. A discerning selection of stanzas, occasionally and not too frequently made, tends to elevate and stimulate congregational singing. But omission of stanzas should be made to enhance the propriety of the hymn and not to "save time" or merely to cut the hymn down to conventional size. Admittedly, there may be times when common sense indicates the need for eliminating stanzas or the singing of one stanza only. Omissions ought to be announced prior to singing the hymn rather than interrupting the flow of the hymn by making an unanticipated change. One should remember that in standard hymnals hymns have probably been revised over the years and stanzas eliminated that have lost their meaning.

The quality of congregational hymn singing can be influenced greatly by the musical leadership. The church with trained music leadership

Another confusing matter is regarding the use of the terms

_____ and _____.

(verses, stanzas)

Is the following statement true or false?

When referring to divisions of a hymn, music leaders should use the term "verse." _____

(false)

Why may stanzas be eliminated in the singing of hymns?

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Summarize guidelines given in the adjacent text for music leaders of congregations.

¹⁴ Harry Eshew and Hugh T. McElrath *Sing With Understanding* (Nashville:Broadman Press, 1980), p. 13.

may be considered fortunate; however, there are non-musical factors that are equally or even more important than a leader's musical preparation. The integrity, Christian witness and faithfulness of those who lead and play instruments are of utmost importance. Also one's over-all physical appearance, attitude and pulpit mannerisms will encourage or discourage congregational participation. The music director should present the image of one who is relaxed, self-confident and well-prepared. All details of the service should have been taken care of prior to the hour of worship. The music director should have a neat physical appearance and lead in a cordial but dignified manner. Unless the leader has adequate musical training and understands conducting patterns, he should not attempt to direct the hymns with his hands but should lead with his voice. In either case, he or she should lead with modesty and restraint. The task of the director who leads with his hands is to keep the accompanists, choir and congregation together. The wild flailing of arms without an indication as to the down beat in a measure of music is not sufficient and will detract from the dignity of the service.

Even though a church has a music leader, the pastor still maintains an influence over the congregational singing. The pastor should open his hymnal and participate actively along with the congregation. When the congregation stands to sing, the pastor should also stand. The pastor should control his singing voice and not seek to dominate by singing too loudly but enter into the spirit of worship as one of the congregation.

Accompanists also have an influential role in congregational singing. In many cases the accompanists are the true leaders of congregational singing. The same non-musical factors that obtain for the music leader are valid for the accompanists. There exists the temptation for accompanists to disappear immediately following the benediction. Accompanists are members of the church who should be interested in the total programme and should participate in it. Above all, the accompanists should be friendly to the other members and show a spirit of compassion and Christian love.

The choral programme of the church is extremely important. The choir is the only organization that shares the pulpit with the pastor. Choirs rehearse long hours in preparation for forthcoming services. Yet the most important contribution the choir makes is in reinforcing and assisting in leading the congregational singing. To do this effectively requires rehearsal of the hymns to be used in the coming services as well as an adequate understanding of the order of

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Is the following statement true or false?

When a congregation has a music leader, the pastor has no responsibility for the music service. _____

(false)

Draw a circle around the best answer.

The most important contribution the choir makes to a worship service is:

The choir rehearsal

Helping the congregational singing

Singing special music.

(Compare your answer with the text.)

worship. There should be no surprises in the service. Thus the choir takes its place feeling confident and prepared. Facial expression and posture are important in encouraging the congregation to sing.

Summary

Have you felt that our journey may have seemed like a lonely affair at some points as we struggled together in the desolate wilderness of the Old Testament or in the cultural ambiguity of the New Testament? Yet it ends in the corporate context of your congregation on a high note of celebration. Congregational singing reminds us of our interdependence within the believing community. Will you join with me in acknowledging your indebtedness to many other persons as we review the highlights of this final lesson?

Christianity has always been a singing religion. It would be difficult to imagine an effective worship service without congregational singing. The amount of time in the service devoted to singing is an indication of its importance. Through participating in hymn singing Christians give expression to their deepest feelings of praise, adoration, prayer, testimony and witness. Singing together uplifts individuals and unifies congregations.

Gospel choruses have an important place in worship when used appropriately and wisely. Their main contribution is in the area of building fellowship and Christian joy. However, choruses are limited in their contribution to the edification of the Church. They are not intended to replace standard hymns.

Worship leaders should be alert to ways of improving congregational singing. For singing to be meaningful leaders should be aware of numerous details in proper planning and training of the choir and congregation. The quality of congregational singing is not determined by the loudness and velocity of the singing but by the vitality and devotional joy expressed.

Churches should continue to learn new and meaningful hymns that make Christian worship and everyday living relevant to today's world situation. Leaders should use wisdom in the presentation of new hymns to assure their acceptance by the congregation.

Leaders of worship programmes should understand the subtle difference between "hymn" and "page" numbers. It is incorrect to use the term "page number" when referring to hymns. Leaders should also learn the distinction between "verse" and "stanza." The correct terminology with hymns is "stanzas" rather than "verses."

There are numerous non-musical factors that

influence healthy congregational singing. These include the basic integrity, Christian witness, physical appearance, attitude, facial expression, posture and pulpit mannerisms of worship leaders, accompanists and choir members.

Untrained music directors should lead congregational singing with their voices rather than by the uncontrolled flailing of their hands and arms. Trained musicians should conduct with proper energy but with dignity and modesty.

The congregation is blessed by regular musical renditions by the choir. However, the choir's principal contribution to the service is to assist and encourage congregational singing.

Now that our journey is over, let me remind you that it has been more than the lighting of one candle. You may be the key person in making sure that everyone in the congregation lights his or her candle as new insight and inspiration are received from music and worship. It is in the act of lighting many candles through music and worship that God will enable us to dispel the darkness of the world. To that end may we rededicate ourselves by saying: "Here am I! Send me!"

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (*Levels 1, 2, and 3*). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. What is the most important aspect of church music?

2. What contribution did Martin Luther make to church music?

3. Name two important contributors to the advancement of hymn singing in churches.

4. Why is congregational singing so important in Christian worship?

5. What does congregational singing depend upon?

6. What does John Wilson mean when he talks about congregational singing as ingoing, outgoing, and upreaching?

7. State the advantages to gospel choruses.

8. List the disadvantages of gospel choruses.

9. State five things congregational singing needs to be based upon.

10. What is meant by the religious character of hymns?

11. How can new songs be presented to the congregation to avoid their rejection?

12. What is the better way for the music director to announce hymns to the congregation?

13. Explain the difference between "verse" and "stanza."

14. State some guidelines for the music leader of a congregation.

15. What role does the pastor take in congregational singing?

16. What is the choir's most important contribution in a worship service?

Supplementary activity (*Levels 2 and 3*). Read pages 92-108 in Segler and answer the following questions.

1. What does Segler state to be the purpose of music?
2. Name three ways music is related to worship.
3. List five ways a musical instrument can be used in worship.
4. Segler states that "the organ is the primary instrument" for worship. Do you agree? Why? Why not?
5. List five principles to use in selecting hymns.

Advanced activity (*Level 3*).

1. Comment on this statement by Segler: "The church does not fulfil its role merely as an effective organization with a busy program; it must be primarily a living organism. Music in worship must contribute vitality to the organism" (p. 97).
2. Comment on the need to maintain balance between objective hymns and subjective hymns.
3. List four hymns under each of the following worship categories: Adoration and Praise; Devotion; Affirmation, Confession, and Instruction; Dedication and Commitment.
4. How would you propose to raise the level of music appreciation in your congregation?

Seminar Discussion

1. Discuss congregational singing and how to use it effectively for God's glory.
2. Discuss the pastor's role in the music of the local church.
3. State guidelines that will help the music leader improve the music in the local congregation.
4. Prepare a complete order of worship that can be used in a worship service. Include the types of hymns needed for a well-rounded worship programme.

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