

the **MUSIC** architect

Blueprints for Engaging
Worshipers in Song

Constance M. Cherry

 **Baker Academic**
a division of Baker Publishing Group
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Constance M. Cherry, *The Music Architect*
Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2016. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

© 2016 by Constance M. Cherry

Published by Baker Academic
a division of Baker Publishing Group
P.O. Box 6287, Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6287
www.bakeracademic.com

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Cherry, Constance M., 1953– author.
Title: The music architect : blueprints for engaging worshipers in song / Constance M. Cherry.
Description: Grand Rapids : Baker Academic, 2016. | Includes index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2016004354 | ISBN 9780801099687 (pbk.)
Subjects: LCSH: Music in churches. | Church music.
Classification: LCC ML3001 .C5 2016 | DDC 264/.23—dc23
LC record available at <http://lcn.loc.gov/2016004354>

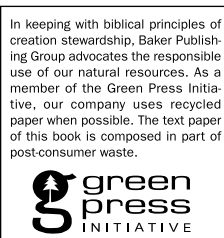
Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations labeled KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

Scripture quotations labeled NIV are from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com

Scripture quotations labeled NLT are from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

16 17 18 19 20 21 22 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



Constance M. Cherry, *The Music Architect*
Baker Academic, a division of Baker Publishing Group, © 2016. Used by permission.

(Unpublished manuscript—copyright protected Baker Publishing Group)

In memory of Ann Baas,
who unknowingly influenced me
toward a lifetime of music ministry in the church.
Thank you.

Contents

Acknowledgments ix

Prelude xi

1. Becoming a Pastoral Musician 1
2. Pouring the Footing: *God-Focused Song* 17
3. Laying the Foundations: *Music's Role in Worship* 37
4. Selecting Songs for the Movements of Worship: *Creating Logical Flow* 71
5. Evaluating Worship Music: *Creating a Canon of Song* 97

Interlude: *Introduction to Shorter and Longer Song Forms* 117

6. Maximizing Shorter Song Forms 121
7. Maximizing Longer Song Forms 151
8. Discovering the Congregation's Worship Voice: *An Alternative Vision for Musical Style* 175
9. Leading Congregational Song: *Practical Guidance from the Trenches* 191

10. Participating in Song as the Body of Christ: *Helping Worshipers to Engage through Singing* 215
 11. Forming Disciples through Song: *Worship as Spiritual Formation* 235
 12. Pursuing Spiritual Leadership through Excellence 253
- Postlude 265
- Appendix A: Assessing Your Canon of Song 266
- Appendix B: Antiphon for Congregational Use 267
- Index 269

Acknowledgments

The writing of any book requires many long hours alone at one's desk, usually in a quiet room. This was the case for me, as evenings and weekends I sat in my home office, concentrating on this manuscript. Yet a strange thing happened in my solitude. Week after week I found myself reflecting often on many individuals from my past who unknowingly played a significant role in starting or keeping me on the path of music ministry in the local church. Their faces have flashed before me more than once as the chapters unfolded. Some spoke encouragement into my life when I was a young child, others when I was a teenager, collegian, or young adult in ministry. And on it goes. I marveled as I recalled each one and was struck again by how instrumental they were at certain points in time. I was not alone at my desk after all. I had my own personal great cloud of witnesses.

It strikes me as appropriate to acknowledge their virtual role in the writing of this book, for even though their influence spans my lifetime, each one has ultimately contributed greatly to this endeavor of the moment. I owe them a great deal of thanks, for I would not be in a position to undertake this project without the contribution each made in their own way. Most of these folks would not consider themselves to have been significant, but they were. I therefore wish to acknowledge a few of them, though this roll call of saints is only representative (there have been many more). They include Ann Baas, children's Sunday school superintendent of the First United Brethren Church of Lansing, Michigan; Bishop Ray Seilhamer, pastor of College Park United Brethren Church in Huntington, Indiana; Dr. E. Dewitt Baker, president of Huntington College; Hugh T. McElrath, hymnology professor; Carlos Harrow and Charlie Walker, two church custodians (church custodians are very

wise people); Joanne Neikirk, encourager; Mary Kirk, organist extraordinaire and friend; Dorothy Wells, daring layperson who was obedient to the voice of God; Bonnie Pollock and Alberta Duncan, church secretaries (and as wise as custodians); and Daisy Vollrath, woman of hospitality and prayer. Only God knows the critical roles you have played at junctures in my life. Thank you for helping me to run with perseverance the race marked out for me.

Certain of my need for the prayers of others while undertaking this venture, I am grateful that a group of ten people, representing various ages, places, ethnicities, and vocations, agreed to lift me daily before God as members of a prayer circle. Thank you so very much. Though I did not hear your prayers, I felt them. Thanks also go to my dad, the Rev. Dr. Harold Cherry, who maintains a vital prayer ministry for his family and many others. I am aware that a number of my colleagues at Indiana Wesleyan University have prayed for me throughout this project as well. It has meant so much. If this book makes any contribution to the kingdom's work, it is because of those who have prayed for it.

I express sincere thanks to Indiana Wesleyan University, its academic support for the writing of this book through the Hinds Fellowship Award, and my exceptional colleagues within the School of Theology and Ministry who express interest in and support for my ongoing work. I especially thank Elaine Bernius and Chris Bounds, who generously served as consultants in their respective fields of biblical studies and theology.

This book has emerged (as have the other books) as my attempt to fulfill a curricular need for the classroom and ultimately for the church. The delightful students at IWU, as well as those at The Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies, inspire me. Their probing questions and insights shape my perspectives and challenge my thinking. Their influence is represented in the pages of the book. Thank you.

Special thanks to Kelly Bixler for her superb work in formatting and editing.

I very much appreciate the support and friendship of Bob Hosack at Baker Publishing for yet another opportunity for publication. Thanks to all of the fine people at Baker for seeing this project through from beginning to end. I am honored to work with you.

I conclude with gratitude to God, the source and subject of the Christian's song. Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere.

Prelude

You and I have something in common. If you are holding this book in your hands or perusing it digitally, chances are we share a passion for at least two things: worshipping the triune God of Scripture and making music in community as a primary means to do so. This is a book about the connection between music and worship. I imagine that you have experienced the wonder of worship through song. Perhaps you, like me, are a participant in the song or a leader of it. If so, at times you've probably found yourself wondering how you can become a better participant or a more effective leader of worship music. You're not alone. Every worship leader I know has real questions—not so much about how they can become a better musician, as important as that is, but how they can lead worship as a musician. If that's you, then this book will help.

Why a Book about Worship Music?

The church faces a daunting dilemma today. There are many musicians serving in worship services who are very talented but far fewer who have had any real education in worship. They have incredible voices, they can play drums and pianos, organs, and guitars beautifully, and they direct excellent choirs and vocal teams of all kinds—yet they have had virtually no formal training in what amounts to the most important ongoing event of a Christian community: its worship. Even most pastors have not had the privilege of taking courses dedicated to worship in their ministerial preparation. This has left us with a lot of talented, well-intentioned but underprepared individuals when it comes to leading God's people in the most important work to which we

are called. This book stands in the gap between the underequipped worship leaders and those sincere Christians gathered before them, who together worship God on a weekly basis.

Yet while this is a book about musical leadership in the church, it's not just for musicians. There are many people who have responsibility for music in worship, including pastors, sound technicians, accompanists, and graphic artists—a whole array of people routinely have some type of leadership role in the music of worship. One of the greatest needs of the church today is for its leaders to have a clear understanding of music's purpose and a shared vision for its proper role, not only on its own merits but also in relation to the whole service. While this book is about music in the local church, it doesn't attempt to train musicians to become better at performing music. Instead, it seeks to guide all persons vested in the music ministry of the local church (musicians or not) to think more deeply and prayerfully about music in worship so that it can best fulfill its God-given purposes.

The Architect Metaphor

With this in mind, all sorts of people qualify as “music architects”—any persons who share responsibility for providing music in worship. The role of an architect is used lightly as a metaphor in various places in the book. Building architects don't design only functional spaces; they design *beautiful* functional spaces—places where order and beauty meet. They are not just construction engineers but artists too. Even though they are obligated to follow certain necessary steps to create a trustworthy edifice, their work is not predictable or cookie-cutter. Each building is conceived differently according to those who will dwell there. While building architects are faithful to construction principles, they are keenly aware of how the structure will serve the relationships of those who will use the building. They design physical parameters that support the building's purposes, but they are skilled enough to do so while placing their own imprint on the design. When the building is complete, the occupants are set free to enjoy the purposes for which the space was created. The architect then delights in the results that often far exceed what he or she imagined in the design phase.

Music architects also bring order and beauty together, arranging for the necessary parameters for music to best function in worship that will enhance the relationship that occurs there between God and people. They understand music's place in the worship service, its relationship to other components, and its capabilities for encouraging holy encounters. Order and beauty are both

put into play; they are not mutually exclusive. They are partners in a common purpose, in this case bringing glory to God through the music of worship in a particular time and place in ways that are far from predictable—unique to each community. Music architects make the arrangements for the people’s participation in song and then set them free to enjoy the meaning and beauty that comes as a result. It is often much more than the music architects dreamed.

What the Reader Can Expect

This book is distinctly different in several ways from other books about worship music. First, worship and music have come to be used synonymously these days. Sadly, in many places music is referred to *as* worship, as if to assume they are one and the same. Some books add to this confusion of terms. This book seeks to help leaders understand worship and music as related but separate entities. Second, probably because of such confusion, “worship leader” has come to mean only those involved in making music. This book defines the worship leader much more broadly to include anyone who has responsibility for music in worship, including, but not limited to, musicians. Third, I have intentionally chosen to refer to worship music rather than church music. The term “worship music,” in present standard use, has come to refer almost exclusively to the songs that the gathered church sings. Since that is the primary focus of this book—the congregation worshipping through its songs—it simply makes sense to use this term. The field of church music traditionally entails a wide range of needed expertise with an emphasis on the classic musical development of the leader. It typically encompasses such things as graded choir systems, the development of instrumental and vocal ensembles, musical programming, congregational song choices and leading, service planning, and the administration of music departments within the church. I appreciate the great tradition of church music. I simply wish to be clear that if you are a church musician who is looking for help along all of those lines, you will be disappointed to find most of these topics unaddressed; fortunately, those needs are well met in other places. Here, however, you will find insight and practical assistance in performing your primary duty: leading the church’s song.

The Music Architect is at once both narrower and broader in focus than that of church music. It is narrower in that it concentrates almost entirely on just one thing—the song of the church (and how to lead it in one’s context); it is broader in that it takes this one thing and examines it widely from multiple perspectives, each of which is critical for leading music effectively. This is why I use both words strategically throughout the book: “song” to refer to

that which is sung by worshipers and “music” to refer to the larger domain of which song is a part. In short, this book attempts to help leaders (1) think about worship music holistically and (2) disciple worshipers as the primary participants of the church’s song. It is a comprehensive guide for various leaders in the church to help worshipers fully engage in their calling to sing unto the Lord in corporate worship. The main thrust of *The Music Architect* is congregational song and the leaders who employ it thoughtfully, faithfully, and prayerfully for the sake of the church’s worship.

I write this book out of my experience as a worship leader who has served the church vocationally in this capacity for more than four decades as both musician and pastor. I have had the good fortune to serve churches in small, medium, and megachurch sizes, representing various styles, with people who can’t read music and with superb professional studio musicians. I have served in Anglo churches and multicultural churches, in rural areas and huge metropolitan areas. Early on, I completed music degrees to prepare me for this area of ministry, and I enjoyed developing my skills and helping others make music in the house of God. However, before long I was hungry to understand much more of the relationship between music and worship. I knew that one was not the other. Still, how did they relate? Thankfully, I had the opportunity to complete graduate programs in theology and liturgical studies, which answered some of my questions. I’m still working on the integration of theology, liturgy, music, and ministry. I anticipate it being a lifelong pursuit. I make no claims at having all the answers, or even very many, but I relish the collaborative spirit of all who are pursuing God’s ways and will in these matters, as together we seek to have the mind of Christ.

Precisely because my own leadership will always be a work in progress, I have attempted to write this book more conversationally, as someone who is speaking *with* others not *at* others. I therefore have occasionally included voices of a few current worship leaders whom I have met along the way. I have also used first- and second-person pronouns so as to create a sense that we are not teacher/pupils or expert/novices but colleagues, regardless of our level of expertise or experience. Read this book as if you are sitting with the author and other readers on couches in a local coffee shop discussing these matters of great interest and significance, not only to us but also to the people we serve. With this prelude, I hope you can begin to smell the coffee perking.

How This Book Can Help

This book is the third volume in The Worship Architect series. The first, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and*

Biblically Faithful Services (Baker Academic, 2010), is a book about planning the whole service of worship from beginning to end, from the concept stage to leading it in real time. Two chapters are dedicated to providing the worship architect with a very basic introduction to incorporating congregational song into worship as one component among many others. The second volume, *The Special Service Worship Architect: Blueprints for Weddings, Funerals, Baptisms, Holy Communion, and Other Occasions* (Baker Academic, 2013), applies the principles of worship preparation to the sacraments/ordinances, life passages, and other special occasions of worship. Music is not addressed other than song suggestions made for each service. Both volumes are presently being used in academic institutions to train future ministerial leaders and in local church settings to sharpen pastoral and lay leadership. These books are available not only in English but also in other languages. This final volume undertakes a third, more specific aspect of worship: its music. It is my prayer that this book will also find its way into the hands of teachers, both in the academy and in local churches, to help them disciple others in the ministry of music in worship.

The three books share a few things in common. First, the reader will find a consistent philosophy of worship that runs throughout them. Second, all three volumes unite theology and practice. The church needs leaders who are deeply rooted in biblical, theological, historical, cultural, and pastoral principles that inform their practice in local ministry. Third, the approach to the issues presented in each volume is trans-denominational in nature. While I minister from within the Wesleyan tradition personally, the reader will see that the discussion takes place at a level where all Christian leaders can find much resonance. Leaders must always seek ways to interpret and apply common principles as fitting for their context. Fourth, I seek to take a pastoral approach to worship issues. Leadership in the church is very challenging. Change is difficult and delicate. The strategies presented in each book suggest leadership approaches that demonstrate care and love for the people with whom one serves. Fifth, the organization of each book follows the same plan. Each chapter begins with “Explore,” a set of questions to help the reader begin to think about the topic at hand. “Expand” provides significant content to inform and shape the leader’s thinking. Each chapter then concludes with “Engage”—practical suggestions for application in one’s context. Within each chapter key vocabulary words are shown in bold type and then defined at the end of the chapter. Also included at the end of each chapter is a list of additional resources.

The book begins and ends with a look at the person of the worship leader because *who we are* will always have greater ministerial impact than *what*

we do. Chapter 1 unwraps the idea of the “pastoral musician,” a term that is used in conjunction with “music architect” throughout the book in ways that I hope will be clear. Chapter 12 describes the leader in pursuit of excellence, especially in terms of spiritual leadership. These two chapters frame the discussion that takes place in between—ten chapters that address distinct topics to help music architects carry out their duties with a high level of competence. These chapters address, in order, the following:

- Music in relation to the big picture of worship
- Music’s particular role and functions in worship
- Placing songs effectively in the order of worship
- Evaluating worship music
- Maximizing shorter song forms
- Maximizing longer song forms
- Distinguishing between worship style and worship voice
- Techniques for leading congregational song
- Raising the level of engagement among worshipers
- The formational nature of worship

An interlude (a brief introduction to using a wide variety of congregational song) and a postlude (conclusion) round out the book.

So, if you wish to discover how to take your own musical participation or leadership to the next level in your local worshiping assembly, wherever that may be, you have come to the right place. Pull up a chair and bring your coffee mug. There’s room at the table for you.

Constance M. Cherry
Pentecost Sunday 2015

1

Becoming a Pastoral Musician

Explore

Before reading this chapter, reflect on and discuss these questions with a good friend:

1. Have you recently been in a group where people were asked to introduce themselves? How many of them included some sort of vocational identity as part of their introduction?
2. Other than ministry-related, what titles do you presently hold (formal or informal)?
3. How would you change the way these titles are worded if you could?

Expand

We are often defined by our titles. For better or for worse, titles establish our identities. Notice how often when called on to introduce ourselves in a public gathering, we do so by saying what we do: “I’m a stay-at-home dad”; “I am a principal at the local high school.” Whether titles are formal (“senior defense attorney for the city of Los Angeles”) or informal (“mama”), they serve as a clue to who we are and what we do. What we do, of course,

is not the same thing as who we are. First and foremost, we are children of God made in the *imago Dei*, apart from what our job might be. At the same time, who we are and what we do are often related, for our interests, natural talents, spiritual giftedness, cultural contexts, and so on not only help to form who we are but also often determine the trajectories of our lives, leading us naturally to our primary vocations. The connection between who we are and what we do is all but unavoidable in Western cultures.

Many folks engaged in musical leadership in the church, whether paid or not, have a title that describes their role: worship leader, pastor, worship pastor, director of music, minister of music, worship arts pastor—these are just a few of the common ones. Options have proliferated in recent years, as a visit to any ministry job-search website will attest. But is there a title that combines both *what* you do and *who* you are?

In this chapter we will examine just such a title in depth: **pastoral musician**. While any number of titles can be appropriate for persons invested in worship music leadership, this one holds profound potential for capturing much more than one's duties to be performed; it also represents how leaders approach their duties in a particular way as a result of who they are. The purpose of this book is to assist persons charged with musical leadership in the local church with carrying out their duties in ways that are glorifying to God and edifying to worshippers. The title “pastoral musician” reflects a multidimensional type of leadership that combines both being *and* doing—a leader who is being conformed to the image of Christ and, as a result, is able to do God-focused ministry with others. This term will be used broadly to include any and all persons with responsibilities for any aspect of the music in corporate worship. (This approach will become clearer as we go along.) Remember that pastoral musicians are also worship architects. As explained in the prelude to the book, worship architects are those persons with responsibility for designing and leading a full service of worship in its many aspects, from concept stage to the service itself to its evaluation. One dimension of such responsibility is the musical leadership for the service of worship; in that sense we are music architects in particular.

Defining the Pastoral Musician

The term “pastoral musician” has had a distinguished history in some sectors of Christianity while unknown in others, but it is a term with much merit. A definition will help to describe what is meant:

A pastoral musician is a spiritual leader with developed skill and God-given responsibility for selecting, employing, and/or leading music in worship in ways that serve the actions of the liturgy, engage worshipers as full participants, and reflect upon biblical, theological, and contextual implications, all for the ultimate purpose of glorifying God.¹

There are several key phrases and ideas found in this definition. First, pastoral musicians are spiritual leaders; they lead out of their relationship with Jesus Christ, and their leadership is offered for the spiritual development of the church. Next, pastoral musicians have developed skill. They possess more than natural talent; they have intentionally invested in training to maximize their skill set(s) as a means to serve Christ and his church in a manner that is worthy of their calling. They seek to honor God through the ongoing nurture of the gifts God has given them. Pastoral musicians also have God-given responsibility for some aspects of the music employed in worship. Whether remunerated or volunteer, they have been placed in designated leadership for this ministry by the will of God and the church. Pastoral musicians understand that music serves the greater purposes of biblical worship, and they help participants to become fully engaged in the fulfilling of those purposes. They also give thoughtful consideration to theological reference points that undergird their ministry so as to ground it faithfully in biblical and historical Christianity. At the same time they are aware of contextual and cultural realities as they seek to offer the music of the community most fitting in a given locale. Last, pastoral musicians are deeply committed to enabling all worshipers to sing of God's glory.

Describing the Pastoral Musician

Definitions can be very helpful; however, sometimes a *description* of the type of person and ministry can be equally advantageous. Below is a series of succinct descriptive statements that begin to tease out the definition of the pastoral musician. The statements describe three dimensions: the *person* of the pastoral musician, the *vision* of the pastoral musician, and the *role* of the pastoral musician. Following each group of statements, which are comprehensive but not exhaustive, I will elaborate on some of the principal themes, while leaving others to be addressed at length in the succeeding chapters.

1. Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 180 (adapted). Based on ideas from J. Robert Clinton.

The Person of the Pastoral Musician

Pastoral musicians begin by recognizing who they are as God's beloved and redeemed creation on a journey of growth and service.

Characteristics of the person include the following:

- Fully embraces and lives the Christian faith
- Demonstrates a developing spiritual maturity
- Demonstrates awareness of personal spiritual gifts
- Senses a vocational call to worship ministry²
- Embraces, encourages, and loves the persons in the community God has given him or her to oversee
- Is committed to lifelong learning
- Is accountable to God and to others for his or her ongoing development as a pastoral musician

The *person* who you are in ministry will affect your ministry more than any skill or quality you possess. In the end, who you are will leave a more lasting impression than what you do. Our personhood is rooted in the *imago Dei*. We are humans made in the likeness of God (Gen. 1:26). Beyond this, we also become children of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26). Our identity as persons is found first and foremost in our relationship with God by virtue of our creation (made in the image of God) and in our re-creation (becoming children of God). While the source of our identity is rooted in our relationship with God, our personhood develops and matures over time; it is a lifetime process. The person of the pastoral musician (whom we have become, are becoming, and will become) possesses several important characteristics: is a disciple of Jesus Christ, has a deepening spiritual maturity, is a member of the church, and has a sense of vocation.

Disciple of Jesus Christ. The starting place for a true pastoral musician is that she or he is a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ. As a leader, one's relationship with Christ is the foundation for ministry. Non-Christians can fulfill tasks in a religious setting, but they cannot do *ministry* apart from a relationship with the One in whose name they minister.³ Pastoral musicians

2. This does not necessarily suggest an official ecclesial credential, though a leader may hold one. A pastoral musician is better defined by the way he or she goes about worship and music ministry than whether he or she is credentialed.

3. That is not to say that God will not use the work of non-Christians for the benefit of the church; this happens frequently by God's grace. It is to say that ministry is how one lives out his or her vocational call from God, which presumes that he or she is a devoted Christ-follower.

will identify themselves as Christians; they will demonstrate love and devotion to the triune God and love and compassion for others. They will be committed to the orthodox tenets of Christianity and embrace the Scriptures as authoritative for life and ministry. They will name Jesus as Lord and live according to his teachings. Being in Christ is a prerequisite for true ministry.

Deepening spiritual maturity. Pastoral musicians not only declare their faith as Christians; they also commit themselves to a lifelong pursuit of spiritual maturity. Our growth in Christ cannot be separated from our growth in leadership, for how we develop as leaders is deeply linked to how God is forming us into the likeness of his Son. Our view of leadership shifts over time in relation to our experience of God at work in our lives. It is common for young leaders to embrace secular models of leadership for ministry, sometimes overlaid with Christian terminology in order to authenticate its use in the church, only to discover that the biblical portrayal of leadership looks quite different. (Chapter 12 will elaborate on servant leadership as a favored model for Christian leaders.)

Spiritual maturity occurs through the gracious initiatives of God, followed by our intentional cooperation with God in those initiatives. There is no better means for our growth in Christlikeness than our participation in the classic spiritual disciplines of the church.⁴ Spiritual disciplines provide the normative ways and means for our spiritual formation. Transformation is God's work—it is the gift of grace at work for a lifetime. At the same time, God accomplishes spiritual transformation when we offer ourselves willingly as full participants in the process. The point is that pastoral musicians are conscientious about their growth in Christ. It is never growth for growth's sake; rather, it is an honest, dynamic pursuit of holiness so that our will comes into conformity with God's will. It is that type of "long obedience in the same direction"⁵ that is worthy of the pastoral musician. It is that kind of conformity that will produce effective pastoral musicians to lead the church of Jesus Christ.

Member of the church. The pastoral musician's relationship to the church is also central to who we are. The church is not an organization; it is a living organism. As such, it is a dynamic, eternal, worldwide community of Christ-followers who name Jesus as Lord. As baptized believers, we are members of Christ's holy church; we are in union with Christ and all true believers—past, present, and future—who make up the church. Pastoral musicians serve the community of faith in fulfilling their duties. The local church is our context

4. A great starting place for exploring the spiritual disciplines is Richard J. Foster's *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1988).

5. I recommend Eugene H. Peterson's *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction: Discipleship in an Instant Society*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000).

for doing the ministry that we are called to do. There would be no point in serving as a pastoral musician apart from the local church or its parachurch ministries. Pastoral musicians understand the nature of the church and fully embrace its God-given role in the kingdom of God. They view themselves as citizens in a cosmic, universal community who think globally and serve locally. Enabling the music of worship in a local church setting becomes much more than it seems when pastoral musicians serve out of their love for Christ and his church.

Sense of vocation. It is, in fact, the church that helps pastoral musicians make the shift from seeing their duties as employment versus vocation. Some pastoral musicians are paid while others are not, but this is immaterial to the idea of vocation. To embrace a vocation is to recognize a sense of call in relation to one's duties. The English word "vocation" comes from the Latin word *vocatio*, meaning "calling."⁶ It is possible to fulfill a list of duties without a call to ministerial-type service in the church. Plenty of people contract their services with local churches to fulfill a need both for themselves and the church. By contrast, while pastoral musicians will perform certain duties specified by the local church, they will do so out of a strong conviction that God has compelled them, through the Holy Spirit's direction, to offer their service in music ministry for the benefit of the church. Perhaps it can be stated this way: *a pastoral musician is not a musician who happens to serve in a church but a vocational minister who happens to be a musician.*

When speaking of vocation, we are not talking about holding an ecclesial credential, though that may be the case. A credential (e.g., ordination, certification, license, etc.) may be a beneficial and appropriate step to take, but it is not required to be a pastoral musician in most cases. What is required is that we hear the call of God and we answer that call. The vocational call of God usually follows the path of discernment, preparation, and consecration. First is the *discernment* of the call itself. We discover (often slowly) and become convinced that God is moving us toward particular service in the kingdom. The call is heard in concert with input from others in the community of faith. A true call from God does not rest entirely on our individual and singular conviction; other devoted followers who know us well, and recognize along with us that God is speaking, play their needful role in affirming our sense of vocational calling. Next there is *preparation* to fulfill the duties of the call. This will include some type of training, either formal (e.g., courses of study in a program), or informal (e.g., internships/mentoring), or both. At some

6. Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1985), 329.

point after discerning the call there will likely be a point of *consecration* for the work to be undertaken. (Depending on the situation, this may overlap in time with one's preparation.) The church often ratifies the call in some way, either through the laying on of hands, or a document authorizing one's preparation for ministry, or simply by hiring an individual deemed ready to fulfill the stated duties of a particular ministry. Last, vocational servants are committed to lifelong learning and are accountable to God and to others for their ongoing development as a leader in the church.

To summarize, a pastoral musician's primary asset for ministry is the person he or she is. This is what Paul had in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians indicating that the lives of the believers in Corinth were the result of Paul and Timothy's personal ministry among them (see 2 Cor. 3:1–3). Paul claims that letters of recommendation were not needed in order to commend their work among the believers there. Instead, their very lives were their credentials; their ministry stood for itself on the basis of who they were. The result? The believers themselves were seen as an open letter from Christ himself, testifying to the personal ministry of Paul and Timothy among them. At its fundamental level, the gift we bring to ministry is the person we are becoming in Christ.

The Vision of the Pastoral Musician

Pastoral musicians must develop a vision for music in worship that goes both deep and wide. At this point I am not speaking of casting a vision in the managerial sense, though that must happen over time as the leader's metavision comes into focus. I am simply calling pastoral musicians first to an ever-enlarging understanding of what music in worship is all about foundationally and comprehensively.

Characteristics of the visionary pastoral musician include the following:

- Is captivated with pursuing God's view of worship
- Has a solid understanding of biblical worship and its meaning
- Views the core content of worship to be the story of God—what the triune God is doing from creation to re-creation
- Celebrates the Christian year so as to proclaim the story of God in Christ
- Has an awareness of the historical significance of more than two millennia of Christian worship
- Embraces the dialogical nature of worship as revelation/response
- Is able to theologically reflect on worship in light of present culture
- Rejects **anthropomorphic worship** in favor of **christocentric worship**

- Understands that worship is primarily to be relevant to God (while connecting to the people)
- Recognizes that biblical worship is multidirectional in nature (both vertical [Godward] and horizontal [toward one another])
- Understands biblical worship to be primarily corporate in nature
- Rejects passive worship done *for* the community and strives for participative worship done *by* the community
- Understands that worship always forms worshipers, explicitly and implicitly
- Views worship as a larger entity than exclusively music
- Understands the interrelationship (interplay) between music and all the other acts of worship in the whole service
- Views music as a servant of the written text of worship (biblical and liturgical)
- Views the pastoral musician's duties holistically, with sensitivity to the larger purposes of worship, the Christian year, orthodox praxis, and so on
- Views the entire service as prayer, while enabling the Christian community to sing the more specific actions of the liturgy (proclamation, petition, praise, exhortation, call to action, etc.)
- Embraces a wide variety of congregational song drawing from psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs
- Is convinced that the gospel invites a variety of emotions, from gladness to sorrow, from comfort to conviction
- Understands that excellence is a journey, not an end

Pastoral musicians with a broad vision for music in worship will see their duties not as tasks to be accomplished but as ways and means that not only help people to worship locally but also contribute in some way to the global church at worship. Christ has a worshiping church. At any given moment, Christian corporate worship is happening somewhere on our beautiful earth. What's more, worship is eternal; our earthly worship occurs simultaneously with the unceasing worship of heaven—always. This way of thinking returns us to the idea of what it means to think globally and worship locally. Essentially, pastoral musicians must work to enlarge their understanding of what is at play when the church gathers to worship, and they must do so informed by certain scriptural imperatives and historical practices. Yet recognition of these necessities is not enough; we must commit ourselves to leading in such

a way that these imperatives and practices become evident in actual services of worship and that the worshipers under our care begin to experience the largeness of worship as well.

To this end, here are a few “musts” to help us begin to expand our vision for corporate worship.

Biblical principles. Pastoral musicians must gain a solid understanding of biblical worship and its meaning. Pursuing God’s view of worship motivates us. There is no such thing as a singular, detailed order of worship provided for us in the Bible, nor is there one way to go about worship. Nevertheless, there are critical, significant, general principles of worship that explicitly guide our work when we carefully examine what is actually said about corporate worship in the Scriptures. These universally true principles must undergird worship in every time and place.⁷

Historical consciousness. Pastoral musicians must minister with an awareness of the historical significance of more than two millennia of Christian worship. Local church services of worship do not take place as “stand-alones,” uninfluenced by historical reference points. They do not occur in isolation; they have not simply dropped out of the stratosphere. Whether it’s admitted or not, every service of worship is situated in some historical context. Depending on one’s tradition, the historical line may be traced backward to varying degrees of success; nevertheless, there is a longer line of worshipers who have contributed to each expression of corporate worship. Wise leaders will investigate the grand sweep of thousands of years of worship to find and evaluate worship practices in which the church has always found meaning. The point is not to attempt to re-create historical worship practices—as if we even could (or should)—but to identify worship practices that seem to be central to worshiping God in every age and rendering them in a manner that is relevant for today’s worshipers. To think and act historically not only means looking to the past but looking to the future as well. History is not stagnant; it is dynamic. Therefore, every generation will make its own contribution to the historical stream of worship practices that is ever evolving. As pastoral musicians, we should encourage new but meaningful worship practices and also find ways to interpret ancient practices for the present and future. We do so not to prove that we are historical for tradition’s sake; we do so to emphasize the larger view that we do not worship in a vacuum—we worship with the sense of a joyous continuum of worship that has gone uninterrupted for many centuries.

7. For an examination of some of these foundational principles, see Cherry, *Worship Architect*, chaps. 1 and 2.

Spiritually forming. Pastoral musicians must understand that worship always forms worshipers, both explicitly and implicitly. We are forever shaped by what we do (or fail to do) in corporate worship. If we fully understood the power that worship holds to influence us in our love for God and others, we would take it far more seriously than we often do. Over time, pastoral musicians should expect that the services of worship they have planned and led will result in individuals who have been formed in direct relationship to what has transpired in public worship. Our vision of worship is greatly enlarged when we understand that the very choices we make in planning and leading the music of worship will influence others in more ways than we ever dreamed. Recognizing the formational power of worship and its music is critical for the pastoral musician.

Theological reflection. The pastoral musician’s vision for worship must also include theological reflection on worship in light of the surrounding culture. Every worshipping community’s context is influenced by the greater culture that surrounds it. Wise leaders are both students of culture and students of worship. They are able to prayerfully discern when and where the intersection between culture and worship is appropriate and when and where the leader must disallow secular influences in order to preserve Christian worship as truly Christian. Pastoral musicians will neither dismiss the culture in order to hang on to some mistaken view of “pure worship” nor absorb the culture in an indiscriminate manner. They will be careful not to mistake the call for relevancy to include practices that are questionable in light of biblical teaching. Instead, they will prayerfully engage in parsing the culture in which they find themselves so that the worship that they plan and lead will be faithful to God’s vision for worship and voiced in a manner that relates to persons who find themselves worshipping in a certain place and time.

The previous paragraphs have attempted to flesh out some of the ways in which pastoral musicians must begin to enlarge their vision for worship in general and for music in particular. In the process, remember that the vision is dynamic—it will grow over the course of a lifetime, for it is directly related to our spiritual, musical, and ministerial development as well. Our limited and somewhat parochial views must be challenged. We will be able to lead our people only where we ourselves have gone first.

The Role of the Pastoral Musician

Pastoral musicians have one essential role: to enable musical worship of God in Christian community. This takes place by assuming many particular roles that support the primary one.

Characteristic roles of the pastoral musician include the following:

- Has designated responsibilities in worship and music ministry⁸
- Selects and employs music not for its own sake but to serve a greater purpose—that of enabling corporate conversation with the triune God
- Enables the Christian community to both proclaim the truth and respond to the truth through music
- Enables the community to sing both praise and lament
- Prayerfully arrives at a canon of song appropriate to his or her community by applying standards of theological, musical, and lyrical integrity
- Seeks to help his or her God-given community discover its “worship voice” (a meaningful way of communicating with God that is expressive of the community’s particular culture)
- Strengthens and balances the musical style that is normative for his or her community
- Helps worshipers view their worship as connected to the worship of Christian sisters and brothers all over the world
- Helps worshipers view their worship as eternal worship—worship that has been and will always be ongoing—on earth as it is in heaven
- Connects public worship with pursuing justice for others here and now
- Connects public worship with private worship

Pastoral musicians will fulfill particular roles in their ministries. Notice that the roles of pastoral musicians flow from the persons they are becoming and the visions they are developing. What we do in music ministry is derived from who we are and what we believe about music in worship. Vision is translated into implementation. Specific tasks are critical to fulfilling one’s vocational call, *but they must be viewed as a way to express the call rather than be viewed as the call itself*. Again, what we do isn’t essentially who we are; nevertheless, the particular responsibilities pastoral musicians have, like those listed above, are very important to identify and fulfill. The church is depending on this kind of clarity and breadth of leadership. At the same time, perhaps these roles can be grouped into two primary ones as described below.

Worshiper among worshipers. One primary role of all musicians is simply this: they must understand themselves to be a worshiper among worshipers. Musicians must be worshipers themselves. This may seem obvious; however,

8. This may be full-time or part-time, paid or volunteer.

this is not always the case. Occasionally musicians view themselves as professionals who are leading others in music making in the context of a service. This can easily happen, even among leaders with the best of intentions—those who are sincerely devoted to God and desire nothing more than God-honoring worship. We often naturally default into a leadership role and quickly forget that we ourselves are, in fact, worshiping in real time as members of the gathered community. Frankly, we may arrive at home after leading the service(s) only to find ourselves exhausted from the demands of musical leadership. We may ask ourselves, “When do *I* get to worship?”

That’s a good question. There are two perspectives that can help us here. First, it will always be true that once we are pastoral musicians we are occupied with on-the-spot leadership during the service, ranging from directing the congregational singing to participating as an instrumentalist to monitoring the technology to observing the engagement of the people, and so on. With so many jobs to do, we may not feel like a worshiper in that moment. Good news! Our work *is* our worship! One of the biblical words often translated as the word “worship” is *leitourgia*, a Greek term from which we get our English word “liturgy.”⁹ In English Bibles *leitourgia* is translated as “service” or “ministry.” It is also faithfully translated as “worship.” It refers to the holy duties of those who minister before God, especially those functioning as priests (see Luke 1:23 [Zechariah]; Heb. 9:21 [Moses]; and Heb. 8:1–2 [Christ]). It is fair to say that our worship is our service to God, or we can also say, our service is our worship of God. Either way, to worship is to minister. I have found that when I undertake my responsibilities for musical leadership while at the same time offering them to God and the community as an act of worship, it changes everything. It allows me to joyfully accept my God-given duties and transform them into opportunities for offering a sacrifice of praise. I no longer have to ask, “When do I get to worship?” The answer is, “I just did.”

Second, I have carefully worded the phrase “worshiper among worshipers,” as opposed to “lead worshiper.” The term “lead worshiper” has become popular in recent years, and while there is arguably nothing wrong with its use, it may not most accurately depict our role. Being a worshiper among worshipers suggests that we are part of the community endeavoring to engage in the very event to which we call the community. It simply affirms that we, as pastoral musicians, seek to worship among our sisters and brothers even as we lead them. “Lead worshiper,” on the contrary, suggests that the worship leader is the model worshiper to whom others look to imitate. While leaders

9. The Hebrew word used in the Old Testament is *abad*, translated also to mean “worship” (in the performance of priestly/ministerial duties).

do present a necessary disposition for worship that will hopefully encourage others, technically speaking, *people* are not really the lead worshipers. That is the role of Jesus Christ. Christ is our true lead worshiper. It is the role given him by God the Father. The author of Hebrews uses the Greek term *leitourgos* to refer to Christ as the leader of our worship; he is “a minister in the sanctuary” (Heb. 8:2). Chapter 2 will expand on this idea further.

One of the primary roles, then, of pastoral musicians is to foster their own participation as a worshiper among worshipers. This role is related to their own spiritual development and their development as a leader.

Bishop of souls. The second primary role of pastoral musicians is to be shepherd of the worshiping community. By now it should be evident that a pastoral musician has a calling to superintend an event in such a way that God’s people are shepherded toward a real encounter with God and one another. To be a pastoral musician is really about overseeing the flock of God in worship. For this, once again, we look to Jesus as our example. In fact, he is called just that—the “Overseer of your souls” (1 Pet. 2:25 NIV). This stunning phrase is translated as “bishop of your souls” in the King James Version: “For [you] were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” The word “bishop” is the Greek word *episcopos*, meaning overseer. It is comforting to know that we have an Overseer of our souls—Jesus—who stands guard over us as a Shepherd, someone who will provide the watchful care we need as we live the life of worship. That’s the role of the pastoral musician—to oversee, to cast a watchful eye on all the actions and participants of worship while discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit in real time. *A pastoral musician is a bishop of worshiping souls.* While leading worship, pastoral musicians will cast their spiritual gaze heavenward—watching for the movement of God’s Spirit; at the same time they will have an eye toward those under their care, praying for them as worship is under way, guiding them toward doxology. Pastoral musicians watch and listen; they guide and exhort as they lovingly lead fellow worshipers to the throne of God. God has entrusted us to oversee God’s people in worship. Pastoral musicians are bishops of souls. This role is the most important of all.

Conclusion

In some cases, who we are and what we do can seem almost inseparable due to the overwhelming passion with which we invest our lives vocationally. This is the sense one gets when reading Paul’s story in the New Testament. Notice

how Paul introduces himself in each of his letters. Nine out of thirteen epistles begin with Paul describing himself with the title “apostle.”¹⁰ This title was not one he claimed for himself; rather, it was given to him by the will of God (see 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; etc.). The preponderance with which he uses the term “apostle” is telling. The term relates directly to what Paul does as a life calling: he is sent to be an ambassador of the gospel. This is a formal title, entailing Paul’s ministry of apostolic teaching, preaching, church planting, evangelizing, mentoring, and more. When needed, Paul appealed to his title for authority in the first-century church. His title seems to center on what Paul does. Yet it is all but impossible to read the Acts of the Apostles and Paul’s letters and separate who he is from what he does. His passion for his God-given vocational ministry was all-consuming. For Paul, “living is Christ”; he states, “If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me” (Phil. 1:21–22). Formerly he found his identity in his race and in his impressive pedigree (Acts 22:3; Phil. 3:4–6); after his conversion and as his ministry progressed, Paul found his identity through who he was in Jesus Christ and in becoming like him in his sufferings and death (Phil. 3:10). In short, Paul’s person and work seem almost one and the same due to his singular focus and full abandon to the will of God.

We have now come full circle. This chapter began by distinguishing between what we do and who we are in ministry. Sometimes our titles reflect our job responsibilities more than the manner in which we go about ministry. As an exception, Paul’s perspective seems to suggest a holy synthesis between Paul as a person and his vocation as apostle. Likewise, the designation of “pastoral musician” suggests not only one’s ministry responsibilities (musician) but also how these responsibilities are undertaken to God’s glory (pastoral). In the end, our goal is like that of Paul: living is Christ!

Key Terms

anthropomorphic worship. Human-centered worship; the opposite of theocentric worship.

christocentric worship. Christ-centered worship.

pastoral musician. A spiritual leader with developed skill and God-given responsibility for selecting, employing, and/or leading music in worship in ways that serve the actions of the liturgy, engage worshipers as full

10. See Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1.

participants, and reflect upon biblical, theological, and contextual implications, all for the ultimate purpose of glorifying God.

vocation. From the Latin word *vocatio*, meaning “calling.”

To Learn More

Books

Funk, Virgil C., ed. *The Pastoral Musician*. Vol. 5 of *Pastoral Music in Practice*. Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1990.

Westermeyer, Paul. *The Heart of the Matter: Church Music as Praise, Prayer, Proclamation, Story, and Gift*. Chicago: GIA, 2001.

Websites

National Association of Pastoral Musicians. <http://www.npm.org>.

Engage

Bring your music ministry into focus by answering these questions:

1. How has your ministry in music leadership been described thus far? Whether paid or volunteer, what is your present title? If you do not have a title, what do you suppose it would be if your local church leaders were asked to give you one based on your present responsibilities?
2. Imagine that you were given the opportunity to change your title (without changing your ministry responsibilities) to more accurately describe your vision for who you are and what you do. What title would you choose?
3. From your perspective, how would this title describe your vocation more accurately?