



Freshchurch Music

Music can be one of those things that stirs controversy in churches. Part of the reason is, different people have different preferences on the style of music . Part of the reason is, the attitude for those who play the music. And part of the reason seems to be confusion about what's the purpose of music in church. Let's try to clear some of this up now....

At freshchurch, we have a number of core-commitments that shape the way we do church. When it comes to music, there are three core-commitments that are particularly relevant:

We are committed to developing the fruits of God's Spirit, setting our minds on what his Spirit desires, and seeking the gifts of the Spirit **that are good for building up the church.** (Gal 5:22-26, Romans 8:5, 1 Cor 14:12);

We are committed to **serving together, generously using the gifts, abilities and resources God has given, for His glory.** (Eph 4:11-13, Rom 12:6-8); and

We are committed to church activity which is **welcoming and understandable to newcomers** (1 Cor 14:23).

Music in the Bible

As we look at the bible, there's no better place to start than Jesus. We learn that Jesus turned to a song at the time just before he was taken to stand trial and be killed—"When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Mark 14:26).

It's a great reminder that music is important. It has a special place. Even God's own Son turned to music to find comfort and courage. And it's a reminder that music should be part of the time when God's people get together. But, when it comes to our view on music in church, we need to be careful—we can undervalue it, but we can also overvalue it.

If you turn to other parts of the bible, we learn some interesting things about music. The first time music is mentioned—Genesis 4:21—Jubal, 'the father of all who play the harp and flute'. Music here is spoken of in quite a 'neutral' way. It's a gift from God, but it's not sacred. It's how you use it. We can turn to passages such as Exodus 15, and the Psalms to see how music can be used in a 'holy' way—to praise God and cry to God out for help. But when you look through the bible, there is also an 'evil' use of music. By evil music, we don't mean music played in a rock band! But when 'godly' songs are sung by half-hearted people. The Lord hates this! The Lord despises Israel's religious feasts and refuses to listen to the 'noise' of their song,

"Away with the noise of your songs!
I will not listen to the music of your harps
But let justice roll on like a river,
Righteousness like a never failing stream" (Amos 5:23-24).

This is an important reminder—The Lord is not happy with empty lip service, no matter how fine tuned and slickly produced it is. The Lord does not rejoice in great songs and a fantastic 'worship pastor'. Music can not pacify a Holy God. He desires a loving and faithful heart.

Who Do We Sing To In Church?

When you sing, you not only sing to God, otherwise you wouldn't need a microphone! And it's not only to others, otherwise our songs would be devoid of genuine praise and pleading to God. We're actually singing to God **and** for the sake of others. A very helpful passage:

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. **Speak to one another** with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. **Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord**, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. [Ephesians 5:18]

The song leader, like everyone else—is singing for the purpose of encouraging others and giving thanks to God. But, the song leader also has a unique role— helping others to focus on God and on each other.

Q: How can the song leader, other musicians and sound desk people help others to focus on God and on each other?

Q: What can happen that stops the song leaders/musicians/sound people in being effective in helping others focus on God and on each other?

Is Music Worship?

This is worth mentioning because the belief that 'music is worship' is assumed all over the place. The reality is - church music is worship, but it's worship in the same way that is - serving morning tea, cleaning out the rubbish, talking to a newcomer, being kind to your spouse, praying. A key passage is:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. [Romans 12:1].

Notice what the New Testament is telling us here—we don't go into some special sanctified holy building and commence a time of worship with music. For the Christian, all of life devoted to serving God is worship.

This is why at freshchurch we don't have 'worship leaders' but song leaders. That's why you won't hear us particularly refer to music as worship, but music as 'singing' or 'praising God' or 'encouraging each other'. That's why, we're careful to select music that doesn't communicate the message that singing a song is some special worship.

Attitude Matters

When it comes to music, like other upfront roles at church (preaching, praying, etc) , it can be done either with an attitude of service, or an attitude of pride. Have a read of this confession from a music leader:

"I was encouraged to be part of the music team and to take part in leading the music at the service. I was confident and had a natural ability to sing, so I seemed the right choice. But the problem was that though I at times had good intentions, the real reason I was up front week after week was not to serve the congregation but to serve myself.

This became painfully clear to me one day when I was asked at the last minute to file the sheet music after one of our services. At the time, my pastor hadn't noticed my annoyance, but I knew then and there why I was really in the music group. I'd kept telling myself I resented being asked to do something I knew would keep me from catching up with friends after church. But I really resented it for I knew no one was watching me. My heart confirmed it: I was the wrong guy to be leading music in church."

Q: Are there signs in yourself you need to look out for—that would show you're focusing not on serving others, but yourself?

Q: If necessary, what can you do to make a change?

Our commitment to guests at freshchurch

Over the page are some training tips we have for all musicians at freshchurch. It puts it in form of our expectations for guests and visitors when they come to church, and the commitment from the music team to be helpful to the guest.

MUSIC	
GUEST EXPERIENCE	OUR COMMITMENT
<p>Even if you're not familiar with group singing, and may not be musical, you will find our music easy to join in with.</p> <p>You won't feel pressured to join in singing if you don't want to, but will feel comfortable when you do.</p> <p>You won't find our music boring and irrelevant</p> <p>You will recognize that the key thoughts in our songs reflect Biblical truth.</p> <p>You will find our singing is a corporate experience, rather than a private "one-to-one" encounter with God. Church is gathering "together."</p> <p>You may have experienced church music that is either just like a performance, or that is amateurish and embarrassing. You will find our music well rehearsed, well played, and clearly led, because we have worked hard at preparing for everybody's benefit.</p> <p>You may think music is "<i>worship</i>" or that music should create a "spiritual experience" that brings you closer to God.</p>	<p>We'll choose songs that are easy and enjoyable to sing. Our musical style will be contemporary in style, and appropriate to the context.</p> <p>We will lead and sing enthusiastically, but understand that un-churched visitors may not be used to singing.</p> <p>We will work hard to introduce fresh songs, with memorable and helpful bible based lyrics and engaging, sing-able tunes.</p> <p>We will choose songs with lyrics that are Biblical and Christ focused and contemporary.</p> <p>We will consciously choose or modify the majority of our songs to talk about "we" rather than "I". Song leaders engage people actively with eye-contact and body language that invites "connection" and corporate encouragement. We will "sing to one another with thankfulness to God." [Eph 5:19-20; Col 3:16]</p> <p>We will always avoid self-glorifying performance, but aim for good quality out of an attitude of helpful service. We will try to avoid amateurish music not for the sake of our egos, but to better facilitate group singing.</p> <p>We will properly value the emotional impact of music, but will not use music to manipulate. We will recognize that an emotional response is not <i>necessarily</i> a sign of God's Spirit at work. We recognize that <i>true spiritual worship</i> is a life of sacrificial service motivated by the Cross of Christ. [Romans 12:1-3]</p>

Notes for Music Tea Members

- Engage the congregation with eye contact, inclusive body language, clear instructions before songs, and clear and directive song leading.
- Don't "zone out" in your own "personal spiritual experience" as you sing.
- Play and sing in a way that serves the goal of Biblical, Christ focused and corporate singing. Don't overwhelm the singing. It may be necessary to perform more simply to give clear cues and guidance to the congregation.
- Recognise how each song functions in its place in the meeting. For example, opening songs are designed to be energetic, engaging, especially easy to sing, and, importantly, fun for the kids who are still in church. The second song bracket is designed to be more reflective, preparing people to hear from God's word. The final song will ideally reflect on the content of the Bible teaching, re-inforcing central truths, or encouraging appropriate responses to the Word.
- Recognise the value of rehearsal. Even though you are a gifted musician, it's important to iron out glitches, learn arrangements, and rehearse beginnings and endings of songs.