

National Evangelical Anglican Conference 2024

Stephen Hale — 3

Singing as Spiritual Formation

Greg Cooper — 4

Engaging The Heart & The Mind

Alanna Glover and Philip Percival — 8

Sing Lustily and with a Good Courage!

Angela Chandler — 12

Planning For Growth in a Struggling Music Ministry

Alanna Glover — 16

A Plea for a Greater Variety of Songs and Hymns!

Stephen Hale — 22

essentials

Autumn 2024

EFAC AUSTRALIA



Essentials is the journal of the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion. Promoting Christ-centred biblical ministry.



“Sing to the Lord” is the repeated refrain of the Psalms, and one which shapes our corporate worship week by week. Christians delight to sing. Great congregational singing is a key ingredient for healthy, growing churches. Christian songs also shape our personal journeys of maturing in faith, obedience and service. Music ministry is thus a vital aspect of our gathered and dispersed church life, equipping and helping us as Jesus’ disciples to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. In this edition of Essentials we focus on music ministry in our churches.

We hear from Greg Cooper on the manifold ways that singing contributes to spiritual formation. Alanna Glover and Philip Percival urge us to engage heart and mind as we sing, and not to pit emotions against truth, but respond to the gospel with our whole being. We have two practical ministry articles which dig into the nuts and bolts of music ministry. Angela Chandler analyses some trends and expectations in church music before elaborating on practical ways to engage and include a wider, more diverse, pool of people in congregational worship. Alanna Glover addresses the needs of smaller churches, where forming and sustaining a music team can be a constant struggle. She outlines principles for a church’s music ministry that will equip it for long-term

growth. You’ll also find links to several resources Emu Music have developed to serve the local church’s music ministries: conferences, training, and a new searchable, curated ‘Hymnbook’ of contemporary and classic songs.

Continuing the focus on praising God through song, I present a Bible Study on Ephesians 1:3-14, exploring this joyous hymn of praise for the ways it informs and models the praise of God in corporate song. Rhys Bezzant brings us a review of *A History of Contemporary Praise and Worship* – a book that analyses the currents that flowed into the praise and worship music that dominates our churches today. Stephen Hale offers his own plea for greater variety in the subject matter of congregational songs. You’ll also find Stephen’s invitation to come to the EFAC Australia Conference in April – it will be a wonderful time to ‘Recharge, Refresh, Renew.’

I trust that as you read you are encouraged to sing with renewed joy and thanks for God’s grace to us in all its forms.

MARK SIMON, EDITOR

Essentials is published by EFAC Australia.

www.efac.org.au.

ISSN 1328-5858.

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of EFAC nor of the editor.

Material is copyright and may not be reproduced without permission.

Scripture taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Editor for this Issue: Mark Simon

Sub-editing, printing and distribution:

Chris Appleby

Journal design: Clare Potts

Issue layout: Doug Rolfe

Editorial correspondence

essentialsd@gmail.com

To notify of a change of address,

contact Rev Chris Appleby

20 Gordon St Fairfield VIC 3078

cappleby@cappleby.net.au

Photo credits (Unsplash): Front cover - Rafik Wahba, p3 Product School, p5 Vince Fleming, p6 Marius Masalar, p9 Gabriel Gurrola, p10 Jaime Lopes, p13 Freestocks, p14 Wes Hicks, p17 Dayne Topkin, p19 Diego Allen, p20 Hanny Naibaho, p22 Showcat Goldstrand.

What is EFAC?

EFAC is a group of Anglican clergy and lay people who value the evangelical heritage of the Anglican Church, and who endeavour to make a positive, constructive contribution at local, diocesan and national levels. EFAC Australia is part of the world-wide Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion.

The purpose of EFAC is to maintain and promote a strong biblical witness in and through the Anglican Church so as to advance the cause of the gospel in Australia.

The aims of EFAC are:

1. To promote the ultimate authority, the teaching and the use of God’s written word in matters of both faith and conduct.
2. To promote this biblical obedience particularly in the areas of Christian discipleship, servant leadership, church renewal, and mission in the world.
3. To foster support and collaboration among evangelical Anglicans throughout Australia.
4. To function as a resource group to develop and encourage biblically faithful leadership in all spheres of life.
5. To provide a forum, where appropriate: a) for taking counsel together to develop policies and strategies in matters of common concern b) for articulating gospel distinctives in the area of faith, order, life and mission by consultations and publications.
6. To promote evangelism through the local church and planting new congregations.
7. To coordinate and encourage EFAC branches/groups in provinces or dioceses of the Anglican Church in Australia.

Essentials subscriptions and EFAC membership

You can subscribe to Essentials for \$25 per annum, which includes the 4 print issues delivered to you. Go to www.efac.org.au and click the membership menu tab. Follow the link to sign up as a member and click the Essentials only option.

Membership of EFAC includes a subscription to Essentials, which may be in pdf form in some states. EFAC membership is arranged differently in different states, but is available through the membership menu tab at the EFAC website. The rates are:

\$50 per annum full cost

\$25 per annum for students, missionaries or retired persons.

Subscriptions, memberships and donations all at:

www.efac.org.au



essentials



National Evangelical Anglican Conference 2024

STEPHEN HALE

I'm writing to actively encourage you to come to the EFAC Australia Conference in late April this year in Sydney. We've billed it as **Recharge, Refresh, Renew**. We hope those who come will go home feeling inspired as well as refreshed in ministry. It's been a tough few years for all who lead and many people are in need of encouragement and inspiration. Evangelicalism within the Anglican Church of Australia is continuing to extend and grow and there is much to be excited about, in the midst of the many challenges.

Our Bible Study leader is Rev Charlie Skrine, Rector of All Souls Langham Place. Charlie is a fine preacher and will bring the perspective of someone leading in a challenging context in the midst of the current turmoil in the Church of England. Archbishop Kanishka Raffel as President of EFAC will open the conference by sharing with us the challenges they are facing in his own Diocese.

You'll discover what is distinctive about Gospel Leadership with Rev Adam Lowe; Jeri Sparks Jones will encourage you with Gospel Optimism for Young Adults; and you'll learn about Wellness and Mental Health in our community and how we can respond from Valerie Ling.

You will also be able to connect and learn from other people in your areas of ministry. There will be streams for everyone from rectors to youth workers, to key lay leaders and more.

If you want to be refreshed, recharged and renewed you can join us in Sydney on April 30th to May 2nd. [Please Register Now](#).

Stephen Hale
Chair EFAC Australia



Stephen Hale

pictured





Singing as Spiritual Formation

GREG COOPER

Churches in Australia go to incredible lengths to sing together. Typically, churches do not have the resources to do music as they'd like. What's more, views differ on the place of music in church life. Yet Sunday after Sunday, the church sings.

Over the last 15 years, I've had the privilege of visiting churches throughout Australia to help in music ministry training. Almost all have been struggling to motivate their congregations to sing heartily, and to develop bands that lead the congregation well. Some church music teams are thriving – praise God! Yet mostly, churches are just getting by. I know of churches where faithful music teams are few in number and exhausted. I know of churches with no musicians – they sing along to YouTube videos in their services instead. I have served on staff as Music Pastor at three evangelical churches (2 in Sydney, 1 in Melbourne), each holding slightly different views on the place of singing and seeking to lovingly engage with congregational expectations of singing's purpose and song choices. Perhaps these are familiar scenarios. Music ministry is complex.

And yet I've not encountered a single church that has *excluded* singing from its gatherings. Singing on Sundays – some way, somehow – seems to be a non-negotiable. There is a deep sense of singing's inherent value in helping us to hear from God, express our hearts to God, and be unified as God's people. Church leaders recognise the significance of singing in Scripture, and want to help God's people sing.

The Bible appears to treat singing as something of an assumed language among God's people. Singing is not discussed at length, but instead emerges as a natural response to the work of God and the realities of life.

Do we treasure this language and its rich potential for impacting our spiritual formation? My sense is that despite valuing singing, we have perhaps not embraced the *full value* of the gift of song. In this article, I'd love share some thoughts, firstly, on the importance of communicating about why we sing; secondly, on how singing might be significant in God's transformation of his children into Christlikeness; and throughout, on how we might then practically shape our approach to singing. I hope to encourage you to embrace and enjoy the language of



Greg Cooper

pictured

congregational singing – for its potential formative power is immense.

1. COMMUNICATING OFTEN ABOUT WHY WE SING

"Let's stand and sing!"

As we declare these familiar words on Sundays, we, as leaders, probably have a few reasons for wanting our congregation to be singing together. But I wonder if those reasons are regularly shared so that congregations know why to cherish the gift of song?

Singing together is now truly counter-cultural, except at sports events and stadium concerts. It's no wonder that we often find it difficult to sing at church. In singing for an average of 20 minutes on Sunday (4 songs), we ask the congregation to partake in a profoundly physical act requiring effort and focus. Like when declaring a creed, we ask the church to *own* song lyrics, as they read, weigh, and sing them, all within a split second. And as with a creed, we want congregations to not only believe the words, but to *treasure* them – in this moment, and for life. We can help our churches in this by frequently communicating biblical reasons for singing. This communication is often assumed or overlooked. But how powerful for the Christian to be reminded of singing's value, and for the guest to feel welcome through understanding its purpose.

So, we might recall Exodus 15, where the immediate response of Moses and the Israelites to God's saving act is to sing. We might think of the early church's songbook – the Psalms – and its commands to "sing joyfully" (Ps 33:1) and with "grateful praise" (Ps 147:7). We might look forward to the new creation, where all of creation will celebrate Jesus' lordship in song (Revelation 5). And we will likely heed Paul's encouragement to the Colossians to "[l]et the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you



teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts” (Colossians 3:16 NIV) – an exhortation echoed in Ephesians 5:19.

These are just a handful of the Bible’s 400 references to singing, and 50 direct commands to sing!¹ So, at one level, we sing in obedience to God. But we are also imaging God. For remarkably, God himself sings! He promises to rejoice with singing as he gathers his people (Zephaniah 3:17). And in a beautiful scene, the Lord Jesus sings a hymn with his disciples after the Last Supper (Matthew 26:30).

While leaders’ words about singing matter, so too do our actions. When congregations witness their pastor singing heartily, and thanking the musicians for serving, they are reminded that singing is a valuable part of our life together. Service leaders and song leaders may also introduce songs, anchoring them in Scripture and explaining how they help in applying the sermon to our lives. But leaving all mention of singing’s value to song leaders communicates its secondary importance, and misses an opportunity to demonstrate the biblical and pastoral significance of singing in our gathering. So, we might consider an annual sermon on the value of singing. Indeed, sharing with the church about how songs are chosen is vital, for these are the words – like creeds – that we are asking them to own. And equipping church members with these songs for the peaks and troughs of their week (maybe through a Spotify playlist of the church song list) is an investment into a rich culture of singing. Not everyone will like singing, but through communicating its biblical importance, we build a culture that honours God’s desire for his people to sing.

2. THE FORMATIVE LANGUAGE OF SONG

As we live out the biblical call to sing, what is singing doing to us? What might it contribute to our transformation into the people God wants us to be? The impact of congregational singing is, I believe, much like an iceberg: a fraction is apparent above the surface, but far more resides below. We might look to congregation members’ faces or physical engagement with sung worship. But we cannot see the heart, and how God, by his Spirit, might be shaping believers Sunday by Sunday, lyric by lyric.

¹ Bob Kauflin, ‘What Happens When We Sing?’, <https://churchleaders.com/worship/worship-articles/138985-words-of-wonder-what-happens-when-we-sing.html>

Often, we detect something’s value through its absence. We can look back to the pandemic’s singing restrictions to remember how it feels when we can’t sing together. Serving at St Jude’s Anglican in Carlton during that time, I had countless conversations with congregation members who missed singing dearly. “Something important happens when we sing together,” they said. And when we were finally permitted to sing together again, the singing was passionate, and importantly, determined. The underlying message: we need to sing because it’s good for us. That was a beautiful moment in church life. Yet I fear we’ve now reverted to pre-pandemic ways, perhaps taking the gift of song for granted.

Why is singing good for us? Like many ways of God, singing’s shaping of us is mysterious. But we can find some clues in Scripture. The verse I return to often is Colossians 3:16, mentioned above. Two key dynamics are work at here. First, God speaking to us, and us to him – the vertical. And perhaps less commonly addressed, we are speaking to each other – the horizontal. I’ll consider some aspects of these dynamics below.

A vertical language of word and Spirit

The lyrics we sing are to be word-centred, communicating the gospel. Through song, the “message of Christ” (NIV) or “word of Christ” (ESV) is to “dwell in [us] richly” (Col 3:16). With God’s word as the sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17b), we should therefore expect the Spirit to work in us as we sing. While the Spirit may work however he pleases, we are assured of his work through the word. What’s more, Paul writes that as we “contemplate” (NIV) or “behold” (ESV) the Lord’s glory, we are, by the Spirit, being “transformed into [Christ’s] likeness with ever increasing glory” (2 Cor 3:18 NIV). This is extraordinary. As we read, pray, preach, and sing God’s word, we are becoming more like Christ! Our beholding of Christ in song is not just a good thing to do – it is opening





ourselves up to the Spirit's transformative work. A Sunday service is anything but routine!

A vertical language for renewing mind and heart

We are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2), but also the renewing of our hearts. Indeed, Jesus' command to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matt 22:37) indicates that our whole being needs renewing and re-directing towards God. *A Prayer Book for Australia*, from which many of our worship practices emanate, incorporates the rich *Book of Common Prayer* liturgy seeking whole-person renewal, encouraging not merely knowledge of God, but a love of him. In the Lord's Supper service, then, we acknowledge that our "hearts are open" to God, asking him to cleanse our heart's thoughts (*APBA*, 168). Before Communion, we lift our hearts to the Lord, rightly orienting ourselves before him (*APBA*, 176).

How might singing help in renewing heart and mind? In *Christ-Centred Worship*, Bryan Chappell suggests that the Protestant tradition has been in danger of equating "right worship" with "right thought".² But worship is far bigger than that. As James K.A. Smith writes, Christian worship

² Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centred Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 67.



is "counterformative" as we unlearn worldly liturgies – not merely learning new information, but also new and right loves.³ God draws us into an "embodied liturgy" that "inscribes" the gospel on our hearts, "bending the needle of our loves towards Christ, our magnetic north."⁴ Put another way, Tim Keller, in his book *Preaching*, suggests that change in the Christian life happens "not just by giving the mind new arguments, but also by feeding the imagination new beauties".⁵ Is there a greater beauty to feed the imagination than Jesus?

Song is a powerful artform for conveying this beauty. The synergy of artful melody and carefully-crafted poetry allows for expression and reflection in distinct ways. As Smith writes, "song seems to have a privileged channel to our imagination, to our kardia [heart]" – for "song seems to get implanted in us as a mode of bodily memory". As he continues, "[a] song gets absorbed into our imagination in a way that mere texts rarely do."⁶ Given the songs I can remember from childhood, with particular memories attached to them, I think he's right. And given the church songs I often recall on a Wednesday at the doctor's waiting room, or when I'm walking by the Yarra at dusk, I again think he's right. This is not to diminish the significance of the sermon, but rather, to esteem singing as a unique mode of word ministry.

By ensuring our songs are richly biblical, covering a range of scriptural themes, we provide our church with deposits of gospel truth for the imagination. As N.T. Wright states, "[y]ou need imagination to live in God's world ... a world achingly beautiful and awesomely ugly." We need to imagine the world that awaits us, filled with the glory of God – and the Bible helps us "to celebrate the role of the imagination as part of our redeemed, renewed, image-bearing humanness."⁷

The very act of singing is a formative repetitive practice that trains us to think and love Christianly. It fits neatly within Smith's conceptualising of worship as "the

³ James K. A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016), 78.

⁴ Smith, *You Are What You Love*, 84.

⁵ Tim Keller, *Preaching: Communicating Faith in a Sceptical Age* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2015), 160.

⁶ James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 71.

⁷ N.T. Wright, *The Bible and Christian Imagination*, <https://spu.edu/depts/uc/response/summer2k5/features/imagination.asp>



gymnasium in which God retrains our hearts.”⁸ How many times have we sung ‘Be Thou My Vision’, for example? Hundreds. Each time, there is an opportunity to let the lyrics refine us, like sandpaper against the soul. As we sing this prayer to God, we can allow each line to challenge us:

“*Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart*” – but is he the ‘Lord of my heart’, or do I love something else more? Help me, Lord.

“*Riches I heed not, nor man’s empty praise*” – but I do seek after riches and human praise. Lord, I repent and ask for your help to change.

Slowing down to let the lyrics work on us is essential for song’s formative potential to be harnessed.

A vertical and horizontal language for emotion

As we enter church each week, Bob Kauffin suggests that “everybody’s struggling with one of three things: sin, suffering, self-sufficiency.”⁹ I admit to struggling with all three – and the emotions that accompany them. Song is a powerful vehicle for engaging our emotions, applying God’s word to them, and, where necessary, seeking their transformation.

The Psalms stretch the full range of human emotions, from uncontainable praise to despondent lament – and are brutally honest in doing so. In these songs, emotions are not repressed, but carry meaning in the psalmist’s experience of God. Praise is significant in the Psalms, and our songs are generally good at reflecting this. But what about lament? Laments comprise approximately 40 percent of the Psalms.¹⁰ So, Lindsay Wilson writes, corporate lament is thoroughly biblical as a “legitimate stage” in seeking to trust God amidst troubles.¹¹ As Robert S. Smith argues, song was significant for Israel, granting perspective on present troubles and offering future hope.¹² Sung lament in the Psalms did not remove

⁸ James K.A. Smith, *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016), 77.

⁹ Bob Kauffin, ‘Singing in a Pandemic’, ‘Sound Doctrine’ podcast transcript, <https://sovereigngracemusic.org/training/resources/singing-in-a-pandemic/>

¹⁰ Lindsay Wilson, ‘Lament as a Prayer of Faith’ in *A Time for Sorrow: Recovering the Practice of Lament in the Life of The Church*, ed. Scott Harrower and Sean M. McDonough (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2019), 7.

¹¹ Wilson, ‘Lament as a Prayer of Faith’, 21.

¹² Robert S. Smith, ‘Singing Lament’ in *Finding Lost Words*:

the cause of distress, but “renewed [the psalmist’s] trust in the Lord in the midst of continuing trial”.¹³ Each Sunday, carefully selected songs of lament can help us grieve sin and suffering, resting in the love of God – a form of corporate pastoral care.

As we seek to know God more, song can be a companion to us, ministering to our emotions. Zac Hicks writes that emotions and intellect “complement and complete one another” for “[o]ur emotions help us know and experience truth more fully and deeply.”¹⁴ For Hicks, song’s capacity to “describe, mimic, and as a result engender feelings makes it uniquely suited as a vehicle to traverse the terrain toward emotional maturity.”¹⁵ This maturity – “the right ordering of the emotions... rightly expressed in light of the truth”¹⁶ – is key in pursuing maturity in Christ together as the church (Eph 4:13). What a blessing that the simple act of singing together can help us on this journey.

A horizontal language for becoming the people of God

Returning to Colossians 3:16, we are instructed to “teach and admonish one another” as we sing. Really? Teaching is not just to occur through sermons and Bible studies, but also through song. Admonishing (correcting or warning) is also happening as we sing. This is hard to remember in our physical church configurations, where we typically face the front and sing to the back of someone’s head! But I once had the privilege of playing in the band at a conference that was in the round. The band was in the middle, with seats in concentric circles around us. When the singing began, the band became wonderfully invisible as God’s people looked one another in the eye, expressing praise and lament to God, but also to each other. What a wonderful picture of the image on view in Colossians.

Singing with and to one another helps us to transform each other. And it helps us to become who we are – “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession” (1 Peter 2:9 NIV) pursuing unity (Eph 4:13). As we learn to inhabit our new identity as God’s people, we need new words – words that rise above our own, words that are *ours*. This is a key reason why song selection is not to be based on personal preferences, and why a good number of our songs should be in the first

The Church’s Right to Lament, ed. G. Geoffrey Harper and Kit Barker (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 210.

¹³ Smith, ‘Singing Lament’, 212.

¹⁴ Hicks, *The Worship Pastor*, 145.

¹⁵ Hicks, *The Worship Pastor*, 149.

¹⁶ Hicks, *The Worship Pastor*, 146.



person plural (‘we’, ‘our’). As Jeffrey P. Greenman puts it, “right worship reminds us of our true identity as God’s people...we belong to one another.”¹⁷ As we look left and right to one another, we continue to look up to God. Our gatherings, Rhys Bezzant observes, ultimately “celebrate our union with God” – church is about “*us with God*”.¹⁸ Song helps us enjoy these vertical and horizontal dynamics in one.

So, we keep singing

Our need for the gospel is never-ending. In Australia, we are gifted with many ways to immerse ourselves in God’s word: faithful preaching, freedom to meet at mid-week

¹⁷ Jeffrey P. Greenman, *The Pedagogy of Praise: How Congregational Worship Shapes Christian Character* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2016), 24.

¹⁸ Rhys Bezzant, ‘Theology and the Future of Worship: Outlining Two Ways to Worship’, *CASE* 28 (2011), 30 emphasis in original.

Bible studies – and singing together. When singing each Sunday, we may not realise just how much good we are doing – for our own spiritual health, but also the health of the church as we learn to embrace our new identity as God’s people. Singing together gives the church a language that is both biblical and unique in its contribution to forming us as disciples of Christ and as his body. May we keep singing until the endless song of the new creation begins.

Greg Cooper is a musician, songwriter, and music ministry trainer. He loves serving on the music team at City on a Hill (Melbourne), and is currently completing study at Ridley College. gregcoopermusic.com

Engaging The Heart & The Mind

ALANNA GLOVER AND PHILIP PERCIVAL.
© EMU MUSIC

Have you ever watched the musical, the Wizard of Oz? I once read about the characters of Tinman and Scarecrow being used to depict the divide that seems to exist in much of our contemporary church music¹. In the story, Tinman has a brain, but not a heart; Scarecrow has a heart but not a brain; and so they follow the yellow brick road in order to find their missing pieces. Contemporary congregational music is often thought of in the same way. Some songs are ‘Tinman’ songs, they are rich in theology but fail to engage people’s emotions. Others are ‘Scarecrow’ songs that are emotive or catchy, but lack theological depth and end up stirring people through their melodies and experience rather than Biblical truth.

Yet this is not just an issue in our singing. It can be so easy to get the balance wrong in our lives. We can all be prone to separate the heart (our feelings) from the mind (our intellect) when it suits us. For some it can be really easy to let our feelings take priority. Perhaps you’ve been told to “follow your heart,” or “do what *feels* right” or “do what makes you happy.” Our emotions can consume and drive our relationships, our studies, our job and even Christian



Alanna Glover

Philip Percival

pictured

ministry. When our lives are driven by how we feel, we idolise the heart - letting our feelings take priority over Biblical truth and faithful obedience.

Others may struggle with the opposite problem, where everything is determined by the intellect. We can overvalue the pursuit of knowledge, become prone to rationalising everything, or become fearful of feeling and displaying emotion. In ministry, it might mean we’re always arguing the ‘correct’ theological position and sidelining pastoral concerns; or we may come up with rationalised justifications for our lack of genuine heart-led obedience. Being a ‘thinker’ can end up being equally idolatrous. So it’s likely you have experienced these tensions in some sense, both in your life, and in your church singing, especially if your church culture leans heavily one way

¹ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/pastors/1999/spring/9l2032.html>



over the other. My aim is not to push you in one particular direction, but to show how the Bible values Christian singing that engages *both* the heart and the mind, with songs that are both theologically rich and breathtakingly beautiful.

THE BIBLICAL UNITY OF HEART & MIND

The Bible doesn't separate the mind and heart in the same way we often do. Words like 'heart', 'mind', 'spirit' and 'soul' are all used in the New Testament to refer to the whole inner being, including our feelings and thoughts. Scripture makes clear that the message of the gospel is intended to feed our whole being - to produce lives of faith and obedience. Romans 12:2, instructs the Christian to *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*, not as a 1st Century self-improvement exercise, but as a command for Christians to align their thoughts *and* emotions with the will of God. When we come to faith our whole life is changed by the word and the Spirit at work in us. Similarly, when we sing the gospel, we are allowing God to affect and change the whole of who we are.

In Philippians 4, Paul longs for believers to be transformed in the inner self: by rejoicing, being gentle, and putting aside anxiousness. Underlying this transformation is *"the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, [that] will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"* (Phil 4:4-7). In God's 'peace' we experience a vital and intimate 'emotional knowledge' that comforts and protects our souls throughout life. It's not just that we know in our heads that God is faithful and good, but we feel and trust this in our hearts. Similarly, Jesus tells us to *"love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength"* (Mk 12:30). In this way he shows us that 'loving God' is so much more than just feeling the emotion of love; it is a deep, thoughtful, committed, *and* heart-felt love that plays out in everything we do, say and think.

Of course, there are many instances where the bible *does* focus on what we would understand as either the heart or the mind, in order to teach us something specific about living out the gospel. So, without undermining the unity we've discussed, let's have a look at a few passages that emphasise each.

THE MIND

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col 3:1-2)

Our mind (our intellect, our thoughts, our knowledge) is where we process the truth of the gospel made known to us through God's clear and understandable word. As Paul reminds Timothy, *"all Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"*. (2 Tim 3:16-17). It is God's word that is able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, and because of this we can *"call upon the Lord and be saved"* (Rom 10:13). We have to understand the gospel to believe in it!

Understanding and obeying the will of God begins with knowledge of the truth and godly wisdom - which is why the foundation of our singing is the Word of Christ *dwelling richly in us* (Col. 3:16-17). Through our singing of the word, we teach and admonish our fellow believers and offer thanksgiving to God in the name of the Lord Jesus. This is not achieved by the fervour of our singing, but by Christ's powerful word. For this to happen, the songs we sing in church must be clear and truthful. Sadly, some congregational songs focus on producing emotion without understanding. Have you ever passionately thrown yourself into a congregational song and thought half-way through, "what on earth am I singing?!" Paul says of the Israelites in Romans 10:2, *that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge*. This can be equally true of us. When we sing, we don't want our zealously to be based on nothing; we want it to be rooted in the word of Christ and to flow from the truth of his word.

How can we ensure we get this right in our singing? A great place to start is in ensuring that there is a clarity of gospel truth above all else. We then let that truth drive and test any emotional expression in our singing, Paul illustrates this point in 1 Corinthians 14:15 *"I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with*





*my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also.*¹ Paul acknowledges the incredible gift of being able to pray and sing in the spirit, as it enables him to experience the depth and emotion of being Spirit filled. But in the context of the gathered church he places greater value on the church using words that are easily understood; *in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue* (1 Cor. 14:19). By conducting our services (singing included!) in a way that is intelligible, the church will be effective in evangelism (1 Cor 14:24-25) and edification (1 Cor 14:26). God certainly expects our hearts to be stirred when we sing, but it is essential that our songs feed our intellect in a way that builds us up in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

THE HEART

At the same time, the Bible stresses that just as we know Christ in our minds, through the work of the Holy Spirit we also know him in our hearts. But what does it mean for the Spirit to be at work in our hearts? Is it just a special feeling we get when we become a Christian or when we sing a great song, or is it something more profound? In Ephesians, Paul prays this prayer:

¹ In context Paul is using this example to illustrate a specific point about the merits of prophecy over tongues in the Christian gathering (1 Cor.14).



According to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:16-19 ESV)

It is not just our minds that contain knowledge about God. Our whole inner being, our ‘hearts’ are capable of understanding all that God would have us know about our salvation.

Paul emphasises the role of the heart in our salvation when he says: *For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.* (Romans 10:10) As such, the heart becomes the battleground for our salvation and the life of obedience - where we can choose to worship either God the creator or the idols of this world. The heart is where sin and our rebellion against God originates (Matt 15:18-19), which is why Paul’s ongoing prayer is that the hearts of believers remain in Christ (2 Thess 2:4-5). The life of faith therefore requires us knowing Christ in our hearts as much as in our minds. Christian singing plays a vital role here, as the Spirit uses our singing both to plant the word of Christ in our minds, and to stir the affections of our adoration and obedience. In Ephesians 5, Paul sees emotional, word-of-Christ singing as a mark of the *Spirit-filled* believer - one who makes melody to the Lord in their heart and who offers God thanks in every circumstance of life.

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:18-21 ESV)

And it’s here that we see the connection between an inner knowledge of Christ and the expression of emotion; because gospel truth and the emotions that flow from the truth are inseparable in authentic faith. In our singing we see how Spirit-inspired knowledge of God allows us to make melody to him and drives our expressions of thankfulness in everything. We can’t have one without the other.

There can easily be a temptation to reduce the gospel to a list of rational facts about salvation in order to guard against emotionalism or experientialism. But the Bible never discounts the emotions which flow from authentic faith. The life of faith is characterised by the transformed inner being - all because God has first poured his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. If gospel truth and



gospel emotion are inseparable in authentic faith, they are inseparable in Christian singing. Singing the gospel is not a matter affecting more the head or the heart - it is a harmonious and inseparable mix, in which the heart and mind are transformed as we sing Biblical truths that stir godly affections within us.

HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS EXPRESS THEMSELVES?

Is there one appropriate way for Christians to express their emotions when they gather as the church? The Bible certainly gives examples of the way God's people sing, pray, praise and mourn.

David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their brothers as the singers who should play loudly on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise sounds of joy. (1 Chronicles 15:16 ESV)

And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground. (Nehemiah 8:6 ESV)

By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept, when we remembered Zion.

On the willows there we hung up our lyres.

For there our captors required of us songs, and our tormentors, mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" (Psalm 137:1-3 ESV)

Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy! (Psalm 47:1 ESV)

But are these examples *prescriptive*? Should we clap or raise our hands? Should we praise God with 'loud cymbals'? While these examples are all appropriate ways of responding to God both physically and emotionally, they are not prescriptive nor are they appropriate for every context. But they do teach us a few important principles:

- 1. Emotions are good!** As creatures made in the image of God, our emotions are very much part of who we are, and integral to our relationship with God and each other. (Luke 10:27) Within the trinity there is an abundance of love and joy, and God expects to see his own character reflected in the church.
- 2. Emotions flow *from* faith.** While not effective to bring about faith, the expression of emotion is a natural outworking of faith. (Roman 5:2) The songs of the Bible illustrate this over and over again. Think of Mary as she sings in response to God's goodness "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." (Luke 1:46-47)
- 3. We have freedom to express our emotions.** The New Testament is wonderfully non-prescriptive about emotional expression; giving us great freedom and scope. We are told to sing from the heart; although we are never told how that should manifest itself.
- 4. Emotional expression needs to be considerate of others.** Just because you can, doesn't mean you should! In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul talks about how what we do in church should be for the good of the whole body. For some churches that may mean their singing needs to show more joy and thanksgiving. For others, they may need to temper how they express themselves.
- 5. Emotional expression must submit to gospel clarity.** In 1 Corinthians 14, Paul discusses this principle when speaking about tongues and prophecy: it's not that tongues are wrong, but they shouldn't be used when they are not understood, and therefore not useful for building up others.
- 6. Singing is an outward form of emotional expression!** We have seen that singing engages our hearts and minds with Christ and his gospel. But Christian singing is never just a passive activity but one in which the church gives a very real physical expression to the inner work of the word and Spirit. (Isaiah 35:10)

As people made in God's image we are able to think, understand and feel emotions. That's why the Bible is rich with both declarative and emotional language to describe the gospel of salvation. In fact, God longs to capture the hearts and the minds of his people, in order that they may know the fullness of his love in Christ Jesus. It is no surprise then that Christian singing has been used by God throughout history to feed the minds and hearts of his church. As leaders of Christian singing, our responsibility is to ensure that the truth informs and inspires our emotion, and that we allow the Spirit to work in our songs to fill us with the knowledge of the love of Christ.

Alanna Glover is the Creative Director of Emu Music. She has worked in music ministry in Sydney, the UK and the USA.

Philip Percival is the director of Emu Music. He served as the music director at St Ebbe's, Oxford and now at St. Thomas', North Sydney. He is the author of *Then Sings My Soul*, a book about Biblical music ministry for every Christian.



Sing Lustily and with a Good Courage!¹

Growing your church through a welcoming music ministry

ANGELA CHANDLER



Angela Chandler

pictured

Most of my life has been spent in small to medium sized churches with limited resources and one main congregation catering for all ages. Although I have trained as a professional musician, one of my special areas of interest has been encouraging people to participate in communal music-making with whatever experience or skill they have. I have delighted in gathering together a community choir for carol services, hand drumming sessions at our after-school kids club, and nurturing the skills of young musicians in our church. I am grateful for the reflections of some of the participants on their teenage experience in these activities over the years, which are included in this discussion.

GOD WILL PROVIDE

My starting position for all ministry in the local church is this: God will provide.

If we trust that God will give us what we need, then we can start looking at the gifts and resources that God has given us in our own, local community. It is our privilege and responsibility as church leaders to discover and nurture the gifts and people that God has placed in our midst.

If God provides for our particular needs in our particular location and situation, we can proceed with confidence. We don't need to look longingly at the church up the road which has resources we don't have. While we can be encouraged by our wider church fellowship, we don't have to imitate what they are doing. We can take satisfaction in God's particular and loving provision for our community.

A CULTURE OF SERVICE

The commitment to discovering and developing the gifts God has given will happen in a community which is welcoming, affirming and nurturing. An inclusive music ministry will be a reflection of (and a stimulus to) a healthy inclusive community. There will be opportunities to serve which are not restricted to the ministry 'professionals' or other experts. People of different ages

and different faith stages will be engaged in appropriate ministry. Those serving will be reflective of the whole church community – including children. And there will be opportunities to sing! Our music will reflect the needs of our congregation, our current teaching program, the diversity of our community and the riches God has given us.

One of the advantages of a smaller church is that a culture of service is pragmatic as well as desirable. We need to use everyone we have! We don't have the luxury of picking and choosing those who suit a certain 'image' or have professional skills. We need each other, and are grateful for all those who are willing to serve. The current trends and expectations in church music are a challenge. The prevailing music culture is driven by a performance model – whether that is the latest song from a megachurch, or our favourite Christian artist. Are the large churches producing and promoting their music assuming the role of our contemporary cathedrals, with music designed for large spaces, large congregations, professional musicians and sophisticated production? A mountain top experience! But just as it would be unrealistic to expect to replicate a cathedral service with choir and pipe organ in our local church, so too it is unhelpful to attempt a reproduction of the highly produced megachurch sound.

Recordings also shape our expectations. For many in the congregation and in our music team, a professional, recorded performance will be our first impression of and the template for a new song. Some of the trends I observe in congregational music can be attributed to this. A soloist will easily handle a song with an octave and a half range. Not so your average singer in the pew, particularly when the bridge section will hover around the top of the vocal range without relief. An introduction that establishes a particular mood is great for a solo, but doesn't really help the congregation work out what the tune is going to be.

¹ From John Wesley's 'Directions for Singing' in *Select Hymns with Tunes Annexed* (1761)



What about the reality that a song sung by 2000 people in a vast space will necessarily be sung slower than in an intimate gathering? The recommendation at a church music seminar to ‘never play the melody’ makes sense for a performance, but most congregations will be grateful for a vocal and instrumental lead. An unpredictable structure adds to performance interest but will mean that the congregation is dependent on the band at every musical crossroad. And most dangerously, skilful arrangements and production can hide the fact that neither the tune nor the words are particularly helpful or strong.

In general, when done well, church music has helped strengthen my connection to the community and my faith... Note that ‘done well’ in this context has not had any correlation with the level of ‘professionalism’ of the sound. It’s more about how the music engages the community (or not) and how the lyrical content resonates with the congregation. So in my experience, careful selection of music, and carefully building community around the provision, enjoyment and participation in music (including for the congregation), are far more important than the ‘quality’ of the sound. (David)

So how do we navigate the world of contemporary worship music? How will we serve our local congregation well? How will we know when we are succeeding? Here are some practical ideas for your encouragement.

SONG SELECTION

My strategy is to look first at the words. Do they make sense? What about the use of Christian jargon or clichés?



Do the lyrics say something new, or in a fresh way? Would they stand alone? If not, stop there.

Then look at the tune – hum it on its own. Is it easy to sing? Is it a tune that has shape, a hook, something memorable? Is it something you could sing in the shower or in the car? Can it stand alone? If not, stop there. Only then listen to the recording. Don’t let a convincing performance sell a mediocre song.

Work to make your song selections reflect your congregation. A multi-age congregation will appreciate a range of musical styles. A teenager will surprise you by saying that their favourite song is ‘All Creatures of Our God and King.’ An elderly lady will be brought undone by the children’s chorus ‘He Knows My Name.’

Choose music which suits your resources. How and when can you use that didgeridoo or piano accordion?! If your resources are limited, look at folk and world music. It has often thrived in situations with limited resources, and amateur enthusiasm and involvement. These musical styles often put a great emphasis on voices – ordinary voices! Instrumental accompaniment can be minimal.²

Could our music reflect not only the latest music trends, but also solidarity with our brothers and sisters through history and across the world? How will our faith be strengthened by songs of lament, by child-like exuberance, by the engaging of head, heart, hands...and feet? How can our song choices prepare people for worship and for the coming week?

Develop trust. In my experience, the congregation will be happy to try new songs and ways of doing music if they know that it is part of a thoughtful, purposeful plan, rather than a response to the latest fad.

We were worshipping with the world. We were worshipping with history. We were worshipping young and old. We were worshipping in a way that was specific to our community. (Grace)

USING EXPERIENCED MUSICIANS

Keep reminding people of the unique nature of leading church music. We are serving God and his people. We are part of a team. We are dependent on the Holy Spirit. Pianists might need help to clarify their role in the team (e.g. contributing harmony, rhythm, melody, additional colour – but not all at the same time). It might be helpful to consider themselves as a particular instrument or section in an orchestra.

Encourage a mentoring mindset. Get alongside young musicians and encourage them. Show them a new chord or ask about their favourite song. As we rehearse together, there will be opportunities to talk about what a song

² A lot of the music coming from Sovereign Grace, CityAlight, Stuart Townend and the Gettys has its origins in these styles.



means and why we need to play it a bit slower or stronger or softer to support the words. Our prayer together, our words and attitudes will be a powerful example. I loved observing a music team a few years back. The band included an international academic who is a fine musician. He happily played alongside a young teenage pianist, and took directions from the team leader who was in his 20s. God's upside-down kingdom on display.

Joining the music team was my pathway back into church and it was wonderful to be welcomed and treated equally, despite not professing as a Christian or going to church at the time. It gave me the opportunity to experience life alongside Christians, see God's love in action and be part of it. It was lovely, freeing, and demystified church over the course of time. (Bek)

YOUNG INSTRUMENTALISTS NEED LOTS OF SUPPORT

It was my joy to have a junior band at our church when a number of kids were learning music at school. They would join the church junior band after about 6-12 months of tuition. My strategy was as follows:

- Find out what notes they can play comfortably.
- Prepare simple parts based on the harmonic progression, maybe one note in each bar, which can be highlighted on the music or written separately. That note can be given a rhythm for extra interest and energy. 'Tam ti ta, tam ti ta...'keep the beat, keep the beat!

- Step-wise movement, simple rhythms and repeating patterns work well. Syncopated contemporary melodies will be difficult to play.
- Have these musicians play the chorus only, or every second verse, so that wind and brass players can recover. This is also a good way to reinforce the narrative or changing mood of the lyrics within a song.
- Hymns are challenging for kids to play because of quickly changing harmonies but they have predictable rhythms.
- Use SongSelect's transposing function to prepare music for transposing instruments like clarinets, saxophones and trumpets.
- Young keyboard players will need very simple parts – often a repeating chord pattern for one hand, or the melody only.
- Guitarists or bass players might play unplugged beside a mentor.
- Drummers need particular direction because of the prominence of their sound, and the potential to sabotage the tempo and the mood of the song.
- Get organised early – hand out music the week before, and arrange a practice before Sunday. Leave plenty of time for setting up, warming up and tuning.

Having a junior band was a special season in our church. More commonly, we will place young musicians alongside more experienced team members. Often they will start by





preparing only one or two songs for a service. Teenagers have also provided tech support for the music team. Any instrumental work with kids will require lots of prayer, planning and patience. But the rewards will become obvious – affirmed, growing musicians, inspired and encouraged congregations, enthusiastic kids and grateful parents who see their children becoming an active part of the church’s ministry.

It was important to be given a chance in a junior band – or as a junior member of a band – with a patient leader who would put up with both behavioural and musical messiness. (Richard)

ADAPTING HYMNS FOR INSTRUMENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Be discerning. As in any genre, there will be good hymns and bad hymns!

A useful strategy is to strip a hymn back to melody and words only. Sing through a few times, to consider the mood and rhythm implied by the melody and words. Can you detect a rhythmic dance pulse or lyrical folk song in the material? Simplify the harmonies to one or two chords per bar.³ Start adding instruments – maybe a cello or bass guitar, a recorder or violin on the melody, a guitar for harmony... and could someone invest in a cajon or bodhran?

Note that an extra bar may need to be inserted between the verses to give time to breathe and a better musical flow. This will also allow guitars and percussion to play a continuing beat rather than stopping and starting at each verse.

Avoid making adjustments to the melody, as this will frustrate those who already know the hymn.

We have a lot to learn from singing songs that have been around for hundreds of years, and there is encouragement merely in knowing that we stand with Christians throughout the ages in lifting a particular hymn to God. (Bek)

ENGAGING CHILDREN

Find various ways to include children. Can they sing with the team for one of the songs? Could they demonstrate the actions with an adult?

We have encouraged children to draw pictures which are incorporated alongside the lyrics on the projection screen, or prepare slide shows to illustrate particular songs. Their efforts are enjoyed by the congregation, and help the children ponder the words more carefully. Songs about God’s wonderful world are enhanced beautifully by relevant photos.

³ *The Together in Song* melody edition has attempted to simplify hymn harmonies for guitar. Note they are not compatible with the full music edition.

These were places for those in that awkward church stage between being a kid and adult, and places where the congregation could see the young people contributing. (Grace)

Have a box of percussion instruments to hand out occasionally for a bright song of praise - and collect up straight after the song!

Ask a music student to prepare a suitable piece to play during communion or at the close of the service. We have also invited young children to play their simple arrangements of Christmas carols on the piano or recorder before our carol service.

Seize every opportunity! Sing some fun songs at a family night at church. And a church camp is a great time to expose people to new music and take time to teach some harmonies.

Having youth in the team is more inspiring for children in the congregation. Seeing people closer in age to them shows that Christianity isn’t just for adults, but for all ages and stages of life. (Zoe)

LET EVERYTHING THAT HAS BREATH PRAISE THE LORD (PSALM 150:6)

Keep remembering that our job is to help the people of God sing. Make decisions that support the congregational singing rather than our own musical tastes or satisfaction. Ensure that the congregation can hear themselves singing! It is an exhilarating experience to be part of that combined sound. Rounds and simple unaccompanied songs will help the congregation to find its voice. Singing together in harmony is a particular delight.

The congregational singing was the thing that shined brightest. The congregation was the loudest, not the musicians or lead singers... On the whole, to sing at St Mark’s was to sing with the church. You always knew that your small voice was contributing to that wonderful sound. (Grace)

Provide clear leadership and step into an accompanying role when the congregation is owning the song. Take time to pray, prepare and reflect, and to encourage and support your team.

Give thanks for God’s good provision.

Trust in God’s enabling.

Rejoice. Sing lustily and with a good courage!

Angela Chandler has had a long involvement in all aspects of congregational music, including various publishing and recording projects, training events and leading music teams for conferences. Angela works as a music teacher and accompanist, and is also the children and families worker at St Mark's Anglican Church, Forest Hill.



Planning For Growth in a Struggling Music Ministry

ALANNA GLOVER



Alanna Glover

pictured

Wouldn't it be nice if there was a magic formula that could ensure disaster-free Sundays? (Spoiler: there isn't). If you've been in church ministry for any time at all, I'm sure you've experienced your fair share of Sunday service mishaps. (I'm convinced Lionel Richie wasn't in parish ministry - there is nothing *easy* about Sunday mornings, sir!) This isn't entirely surprising; most local churches in Australia are small, often minimally staffed, attended sporadically and run by average people who volunteer their time. If you do it for enough years and with enough people you're bound to have moments where you stop and think, "will this ever get better?!" Church singing can be a particularly challenging exercise in this context. Music attracts lots of opinions, lots of emotions, and lots of logistical hurdles - it is hard to get it right! I'm sorry, I don't have quick fixes for you, but I do have some helpful pointers for setting up a music ministry that enables your church to teach and admonish one another with the word of Christ in song.

Underpinning these pointers is the inevitability that your church (and specifically its music team) will shift and change over time. Your church will go through seasons; as it grows, as people come and go, as society shifts around you, as your community experiences moments of grief and joy - each season bringing with it different needs and challenges. And this is precisely why there is no one-size-fits-all formula to a successful church music ministry. But there are decisions you can make now to prepare your church and your musicians for the growth and change that lies ahead.

1. DEVELOP A CLEAR, LONG-TERM VISION FOR YOUR MUSIC MINISTRY.

It is helpful to have a clear, long-term vision for how your music ministry can serve those in your congregation. What does your music ministry do well? Are there areas in which it could improve? Identifying the strengths and weaknesses will help you to work out which areas need growth and attention.

For example, if your congregation doesn't sing very well, you will need to figure out what issues lie behind the problem and create some concrete and intentional steps that work toward encouraging them to sing better. Or maybe you face a shortage of volunteers to serve on the music team, either because there aren't enough people

with musical skill in the congregation, or because people are resistant to serving. You'll need a plan to train up people to serve. Perhaps the songs themselves aren't right (e.g. they're unsingable, they have bad theology, they're too hard to play) you can overhaul your repertoire and work toward a stronger setlist. Having direction and vision for the future will help your music ministry to move forward with confidence and intentionality,

2. USE THE GIFTS GOD HAS GIVEN YOU

You can be confident that God has given your church exactly what it needs in order to praise him in song. Yes, this is true even if your singing is unaccompanied, or following a youtube video or (most commonly!) led by a hodge-podge of random instruments. It's very tempting to look at your music week to week and think, "We could praise God much better *if only* we had a drummer or if we just had a song leader with more confidence", but actually God provides all we need. Identify the gifts and abilities that God has given the individuals in your congregation and consider the ways these can be used to best serve. As the church grows and changes, so too will the gifts available and you will find that your church goes through seasons of wanting and seasons of plenty. Whichever you're in right now, whatever joyful noise is created by your musicians on a Sunday, take comfort in the knowledge that God cares more about the hearts of those praising him than the sound they make as they do it.

3. ESTABLISH STANDARDS AND SYSTEMS TO GROW INTO

In a small church setting, it can be tempting to be informal and organic about the way things work. The reality is that when it comes to music, less skill and experience is required to lead a smaller group of people. But if we get too comfortable with our small church



music set-up it is unlikely that our music ministry will improve and it may even hold back the growth of your church. If you wish to encourage a church to grow both in spiritual maturity and in numbers, then you must plan for this growth before it happens and take steps toward it. The bigger our music teams become, the more work they are to manage: there are more personalities to juggle, more musicians of varying skill and style, and more planning and administration. If we can have systems in place before we are drowning, we're much more likely to encourage a thriving music ministry. What does this look like in practice? Again, it's not a one-size-fits all deal, but here are some things you could consider.

- Set spiritual and moral standards for those serving in music (ie. they must sign a statement of faith, they must have attended the church for x number of months before serving, they must have completed a church course)
- Clearly communicate what it means to be committed to the music team. (ie. they must commit to a certain number of Sundays a month/year, they must be a part of a small group)
- Create fixed terms for music team members so that their role is reassessed each year. (This is an incredibly valuable point. I can't overstate how frequently I encounter churches who struggle with removing problematic volunteers from their music teams!)

4. PREPARE FOR A TURN-OVER OF MUSICIANS

Over time, people will come and go from your church and your music teams. Depending on your context, some churches will experience this far more than others (e.g. uni churches, those based in transient areas) but understanding and planning for this will mean two things. Firstly, we must be prepared for the holes that are left when people leave. This will have implications for our systems, rosters and song selection (e.g. don't fill your repertoire of songs with ones that rely on a specific musician with a rare skill set). Secondly, as you recruit and resource your musicians, think about how they could use that training elsewhere. By training up each and every musician, when the time comes for them to move on, you can help resource the wider church.

5. CHOOSE SONGS WISELY AND REASSESS REPERTOIRE AND MUSICAL STYLE

Fill your set lists with songs that are singable, playable, beautiful, and above all, clearly contain the word of Christ. Our world today is not short of terrific gospel songs that tick all these boxes, so please do not become complacent about seeking out quality songs to serve your congregation well. Revisit the list often, knowing that

songs will age and your congregation will change. The songs that served your church well a decade before will no longer be the most beneficial today. You can continue to find new songs and musical styles that help your congregation to dwell afresh on the truths of his word.

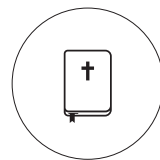
Your Sunday mornings may never be easy, but I do pray that they are wonderful, enriching, and beautiful times of gathering as God's people to dwell on his word and teach and admonish one another in song.

Alanna Glover is the Creative Director of Emu Music. She has worked in music ministry in Sydney, the UK and the USA. She now lives in Sydney where she splits her time between working for Emu, being a mum and completing her Masters of Theology through Birmingham University.

Three resources from Emu Music to strengthen your music ministry:

1. **Word In Song Conferences:** in-person training days <https://emumusic.com/collections/music-ministry-conference>. March and June in Sydney, October in Melbourne + other centres around Australia.
2. **Word In Song Online:** an online course designed to equip church musicians with the key theological and practical skills for local church music ministry. (<https://wordinsong.com/>)
3. **Hymnbook:** a new resource for searching, selecting and using songs for church (<https://hymnbook.app/>)





Ephesians 1:3–14

MARK SIMON

The main feature of the opening to Paul's letter to the Ephesians is praise. Verses 3–14 are described by commentators as a thanksgiving, a eulogy, a hymn of praise or an extended blessing (a *berakah* in Hebrew, declaration of blessing, such as found in Psalm 103). The tone is exuberantly thankful and the content is theologically rich. As such, it represents a model for sung worship in the gathered church. In this study, we'll explore the variety of ways in which Eph 1:3–14 informs and models how we might praise God in corporate song.

Observing the structure of the passage, we note the prominence given to each person of the Trinity. There is specific mention of "God our Father" (v. 2), "the God and Father" of Jesus (v. 3); Jesus/Jesus Christ/Christ (vv. 2, 3, 5, 6 'the Beloved One', 10, 12); and the Holy Spirit (vv. 13–14). The qualities of God's triune character particularly emphasised in this passage are: his sovereign election of a people who are made holy through redemption, adoption, and sealing with the Spirit (vv.5, 7, 13–14); God's gracious initiative in this plan for salvation (vv. 4, 6, 7); and God's love as the motivator of his actions (vv.4–5). Paul highlights in turn God the Father as sovereign over salvation history (vv. 4, 5, 10, 11), Christ as agent of redemption (v.7), and the Spirit as eschatological seal in this rich passage (vv.13–14). The Trinitarian nature of Paul's hymn of praise should encourage us to sing songs to Father, Son and Spirit – celebrating their comprehensive work that secures salvation, not neglecting any person of the Trinity as the object of our worship.

The hymn of praise also incorporates clear statements of God's saving actions. Verse 7 particularly specifies, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." In an age when some songwriters shy away from the language of sin, sacrifice and slavery, we must remember that Christ's work of salvation is presented throughout the New Testament using these very images to underline the depths of our need and the high cost of securing our salvation. We praise God for these spiritual blessings that are priceless indeed.

The timeframe encompassed by Paul's hymn of praise stretches from "before the foundation of the world" (v.4), through our present experience of being sealed by the Spirit (v.14), to the final consummation of God's reconciling work, when in "the fullness of time, [God will] gather up all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things

on earth" (v.10 NRSV). It is therefore right and proper to celebrate in song God's saving acts: past, present and future. It is edifying to rest in our salvation already secured, while looking forward with hope to the still future goal of final redemption. Songs that retell the story of salvation history are an indispensable part of our repertoire.

Corporate worship is also an anticipation of the final "gathering up" of all things in Christ (v.10, 'bring everything together' CSB, 'to unite' ESV).

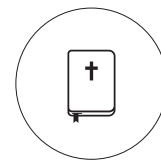
With all wisdom and insight he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.
(NRSV)

Assembling (bringing or gathering together) around the gospel of Jesus Christ is both the means by which God's mission continues and also a result of gospel proclamation by scattered Christians. Our songs can both edify believers and evangelise not-yet believers simultaneously, as they declare the truths of the gospel and invite personal response.

Paul's hymn is marked by intimate language. The loving choice of God (v.4), to adopt us as his children (v.5), to "lavish" grace on us (vv.7–8), his good pleasure to make known to us the mystery of his will (vv.8–9), and the individual marking of each believer with the seal of the Holy Spirit as a pledge (vv.13–14). To be intimately known and loved by God in this way calls forth songs of thanks and love in response. Indeed, we see in the passage following the opening hymn that theological truth should lead to heart-enlightenment and confident trust in God's power:

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe"
(v.18–19 CSB).

There are echoes of Old Testament passages in Eph 1:3–14 that highlight the intended global nature of Christian worship. Words from Eph 1 like blessing (v.3), praise, glory (vv.6, 12, 14), good pleasure (v.9), inheritance (vv.11, 14) and salvation (v.13) are clustered in the account of David's prayer on bringing the ark into the tabernacle in 1 Chronicles 16 (especially vv.23–33, which parallels Psalm 96). A major theme in these Old Testament texts is God's sovereignty over the gods of the nations, God's victory over idols, that inspires God's people to strength and joy



(1 Chr 16:16–27), and the exhortation to “Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous works among all the peoples.” (1 Chr 16:23–24//Ps 96:1–3). In the light of these scriptural echoes, Ephesians 1’s refrain that believers are to “live to the praise of his glory” (Eph 1:6, 12, 14) implies a missional role for believers. God has chosen, predestined, redeemed, adopted and sealed us so that we might live praising God’s glory in our words and deeds – and this lived-out praise should invite members from all nations to acknowledge and praise God. We sing God’s praise in thankfulness that we are beneficiaries of his glorious work of salvation, and we sing God’s praise as a declaration and invitation to those who have not yet

responded by hearing and believing “the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation” (v.13). Ephesians 1 beautifully and comprehensively grounds our sung worship in gospel truths that are the heartbeat of history.

Mark Simon is a parish minister at St Luke’s Anglican Church, Vermont, and New Testament Lecturer and Researcher at Ridley College. He is the author of *Living to the Praise of God’s Glory: A Missional Reading of Ephesians* (Wipf and Stock, 2021).

Library of Celsus, Ephesus



A History of Contemporary Praise and Worship

Understanding the Ideas that Reshaped the Protestant Church

LESTER RUTH AND LIM SWEE HONG
Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021

REVIEWED BY RHYS BEZZANT

Reading this book was like listening to the soundtrack of my earliest years as a Christian in the 1970s. It tells the story of the rise and development of contemporary praise and worship – some of it much earlier than the decade of my conversion! – with lots of quotations from songs, and references to their composers or publishers. But recounting this story is not just about listing choruses. In the hands of Ruth and Hong, we discover the social and the theological pressures which generated a twentieth-century revolution in both musical performance and song-writing. Their focus is on the United States, but their analysis holds good for Australia as well. The authors are professors in the field of Christian worship, so this book was the result of painstaking research – mainly through personal interviews – over many years. Contemporary Christian music has deep and complicated roots.

Their basic argument is that the movement away from traditional worship with organs and hymnbooks was not the result of the Jesus movement among hippies in California in the 1970s – though they might have sped

things up. The recent movie *The Jesus Revolution* gives this impression too. Rather, the move to develop new models of musical worship began much earlier in fundamentalist circles in the 1940s, first in Canada, spreading later to the US and beyond, appealing to a Biblicist model of interpretation, in which Psalm 22:3 outlines precisely how praise works: God promises to make himself present to us when we praise him, for God is enthroned on the praises of Israel. He is not present to us intimately until we praise. Whether we feel like it or not, we must praise God to create the conditions by which he visits us. Only then can we worship him. Praise is the prelude to worship. They are not the same. Indeed there are many words in Hebrew for the notion of raising our voices to exalt God, with different and for the most part non-overlapping meanings according to those earliest circles of music leaders. We praise God to make him present, and we worship to enjoy him intimately. Hebrews 13:15 was the text used to explain how intimacy through the name of God constituted our worship subsequent to our praise. For some of those teachers, the model of David praising God in the temple, or Moses approaching God in the tabernacle, added further Old Testament nuance, both assuming a movement towards greater intimacy as one drew closer to the Holy of Holies. They called themselves the movement of praise and worship, but they did not use the word “contemporary.”

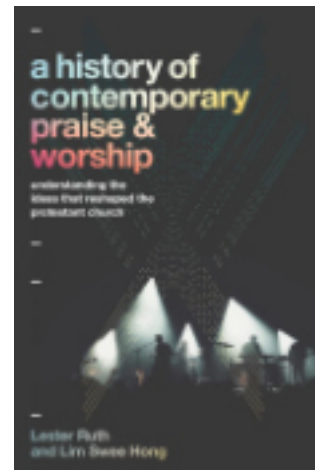
A second stream emerged around the time of WWII, which was not so concerned for precise definitions of words and didn't use the OT for models of spirituality. They did want to make church services more contemporary to appeal to those Christians who no longer attended church because it appeared to them



boring or stuffy. The musical vernacular had changed in the supercharged cultural vicissitudes of the middle of the century, so a new musical language had to be spoken. Like any decent missionary, you had to learn the local language – albeit musical – to reach a generation whose heart language had changed. Ruth and Hong dig a bit deeper in evangelical history to show how reformers and revivalists in the Protestant tradition had frequently made the same appeal to linguistic and cultural adaptation to make their message heard. Charles Wesley, Charles Finney, or Aimee Semple Macpherson were notable agitators for liturgical change in their own day. Their issue was not to change the content but the form of communication in this new musical revolution. What began in midweek Bible studies, was transposed to Sunday services. They made 1 Corinthians 9:22 their slogan, in which the apostle highlighted flexibility as his ministry priority to reach the world.

Traditionally, Christians have spoken of the regulative and the normative principle to describe the practice of worship. The former establishes a rule from the Scriptures which dictates not just the content but the form of worship, and the latter establishes a norm which coheres with the theology of the Bible though is not commanded anywhere in it. However, despite the authors being academics, they do not pick up these categories to present their overview of the twentieth century, though this is exactly the shape of their argument. But they do make abundantly clear that the two streams merge in around the 1960s to create musical exaltation now called “contemporary praise and worship.” They characterise the two streams with the language of “gift” theory and “gap” theory, the former highlighting God’s desire to give his presence as a gift, and the latter highlighting the need to close the gap as Christians engage more intentionally with contemporary culture to win some for Christ. The Great Depression, the Second World War, and the Cold War had radically ruptured traditional approaches to Western culture, so not surprisingly congregational singing underwent radical changes too. New technologies further reshaped expectations and possibilities as well, though they were not the root cause of the change.

Unpicking the threads of the story proves so helpful in isolating theological challenges to congregational singing today. In the “gift” strand, the focus for meeting God in the Sunday service moves from the pastor to the band leader. The traditional means of grace, sermon and sacraments, are no longer the primary strategy for meeting with the Lord. Instead, singing takes on this role. The leader who has been theologically trained gives ground to the musician who in all likelihood has not. The music leader now has a priestly role. This is evident not just in



more charismatic churches, but in many Anglican ones as well, where the platform or the sanctuary is dominated by musical instruments, with font or communion table nowhere to be seen. The Lord’s Supper is marginalised in the life of the congregation, and gives ground to the priestly work of the musician or band leader.

In the “gap” strand, we have come to imagine that the way to draw unbelievers back to church or into the believing community is to recreate an aesthetic or style of worship which is attuned to contemporary cultural (read: musical) vernacular. Personally, I love contemporary music-making in church, but it can easily be assumed that it is the music that bears the weight of evangelism in church, not the sermon, or the prayers, or the testimonies, or the love and welcome of the people. Renewal in the church will take a whole lot more than the choice of songs. But this must also be said: contemporary musicians who arrange a longer set of songs well have understood something which is profoundly liturgical about church. These band leaders have excellent skills in how to sequence the songs to shape a spiritual journey from God-focused high tempo songs, to more mellow reflections on obedience for example. Traditionally, however, this was done with **all** the elements of a church service, taking worshippers on a journey through the storyline of the Bible, beginning with praise of the Creator, moving on to trust in the Saviour, then commitment to the Spirit’s mission and power. Elements and their relationship to each other build suspense, or relieve tension, or to create focus and theme.

This is a great book, though it does contain lots of details about church leaders and musicians whose names don’t normally appear in the historical record. But that is perhaps why it is refreshing too: our own small contributions to Sunday worship can merge to create a flow which impacts vast numbers. As the song from 1969 says, “It only takes a spark to get a fire going.”

Rhys Bezzant is Dean of the Anglican Institute and Senior Lecturer at Ridley College.



A Plea for a Greater Variety of Songs and Hymns!

STEPHEN HALE

One of the dilemmas for those involved in organising and designing Sunday services is the lack of variety of content when it comes to contemporary song selections. There are many great contemporary songs, and we should be very thankful for those who compose and write these songs. There are also some excellent re-imaginings of old classics that work beautifully with a range of demographics. At the same time, one would have to suggest that there are a disproportionate number of songs that focus on adoration and many others that focus on the death of Jesus. In any worship services we should sing songs of adoration and we should reflect on the death of Jesus. It would be strange if we didn't. At the same time there are a range of things which we should also sing about and it's often very hard to find songs that reflect this. I've been involved in services where every song seemed to focus, more or less, on the same thing! If we only sing about one area we run the risk of it becoming so familiar that it just washes over us.

My plea is this – can someone somewhere please write some songs about:

- What it means to be God's people together
- Using our God-given gifts in service
- Living out our faith day to day
- Sharing in God's mission in the world
- Serving God in all of our life and especially through our work and families
- The wonders of creation and our responsibility to tend and care for it
- Responding to injustice and standing for justice
- Being faithful in prayer and perseverance
- Striving for holiness
- The second coming our Lord and the hope of the new future we will share in together
- Crossing cultures for the sake of the kingdom
- The person and work of the Holy Spirit

Some may dismiss this plea as the rantings of a cranky old man! Perhaps that's the case. Others may be thinking, well what about such and such a song or a verse in a particular chorus. This may also be true. For others, simply getting enough people together to form a band may be miraculous in itself and one doesn't have the luxury of thinking too much about the content of what we sing.

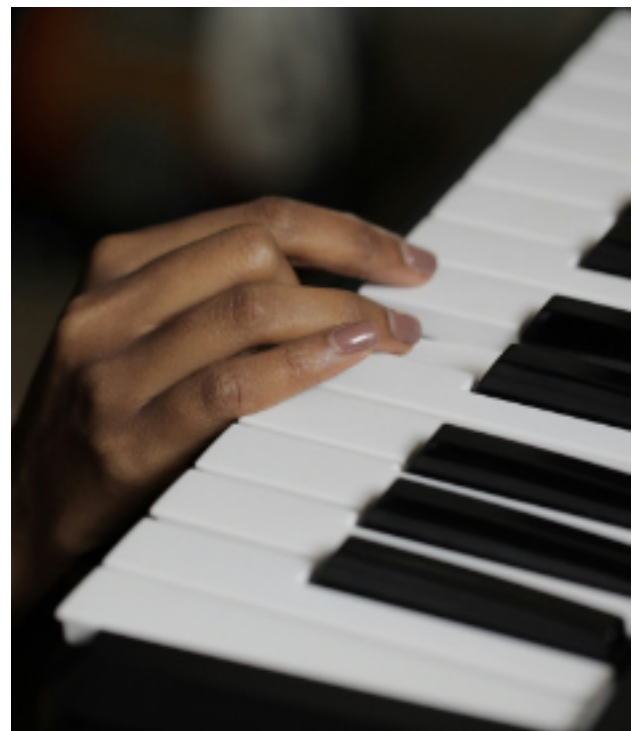


Stephen Hale

pictured

Service design is a challenging area but in broad terms I would hope that we would want to choose songs that pick up on what we are preaching so it is a unified whole. This will involve songs of adoration but hopefully also songs that touch on the list above as well as a range of other areas as well. We can all run the danger in our preaching of having a narrow range of ways in which we apply the teaching of God's word. In the same way we need to sing about the range of doctrines we uphold as well as what it means to live out our faith in all of our life.

Stephen Hale
Chair of EFAC Australia and EFAC Global



NEAC 2024

April 30 – May 2

National Evangelical Anglican Conference

RECHARGE. REFRESH. RENEW.

FUTURE OF EVANGELICAL ANGLICANISM

Great ministry streams on offer.

More details at neac.org.au

Register NOW...



ST BARNABAS BROADWAY SYDNEY

\$240 Super early bird until Dec 1
Student/concession and
group pricing available



Charlie Skrine
Rector, All Souls Langham Place



Jeri Jones Sparks
Asst, St James Croydon



Valerie Ling
Clinical Psychologist



Adam Lowe
Rector, St Bart's Toowoomba



Kanishka Raffel
Archbishop of Sydney



If undeliverable, return to:
EFAC Australia
20 Gordon St
Fairfield, VIC 3078



essentials

The logo for EFAC Australia, featuring a stylized letter 'E' inside a diamond-shaped border.