

Introduction to Singing in a Presbyterian Church Choir



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v1.0 - 2007-03-15

St. Stephen Presbyterian Church



Agenda

- Why do we sing?
- A Brief History of Church Music
 - Music in the Bible
 - Music in the Early Church
 - Music in the Roman Catholic Church
 - Music in the Reformed Church
- Modern Presbyterian Worship
 - The Book Of Order
 - The Theater of Worship
- What do we Sing?



Why Do We Sing?

- We sing lullabies to our babies to comfort them
- We sing story songs and rhymes as children when we play
- We sing songs about our past, our loves and our dreams
- God made us to love and express ourselves with music
- God asks us in the Bible to sing and make music when we worship Him



Scripture Tells Us...

⁴Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises. ⁵Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody. ⁶With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD.

Psalms 98:4-6 (NRSV)



Scripture Tells Us...

¹⁶Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. ¹⁷And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians 3:16-17 (NRSV)



Music in the Early Church

- Not much historical information available about worship music before the 4th century
- Predominant form of music in the early church was a form of liturgical chant called plainsong or plainchant
- One of the earliest known hymns is called Phos Hilaron

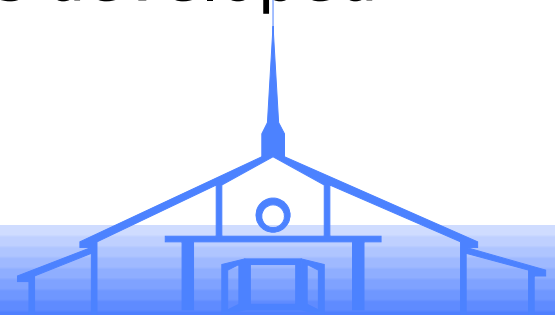
“O Gladsome Light of the holy glory of the Immortal Father, heavenly, holy, blessed Jesus Christ. Now we have come to the setting of the sun and behold the light of evening. We praise God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For it is right at all times to worship Thee with voices of praise, O Son of God and Giver of Life, therefore all the world glorifies Thee.”

'O Gladsome Light' or Phos Hilaron (Φῶς Ἰλαρόν)



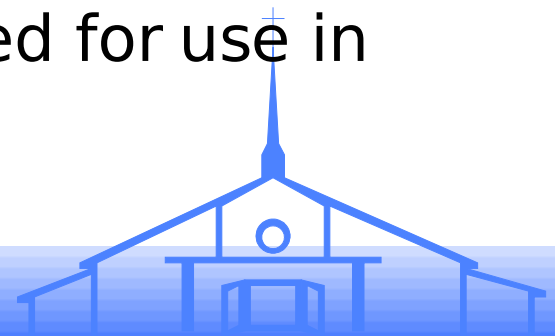
Music in the Early Church

- Roman Emperor Constantine I converts to Christianity in 313 A.D.
- Reforms made after 590 by Pope Gregory I started creating the distinctions between the Roman and Eastern liturgy
- The plainsong chants, the predominant form of music used in worship during this period, eventually came to be called Gregorian chant in his honor about 800
- Musica organum, an early form of simple polyphonic singing based on the Gregorian chant, was developed about 900



Music in the Roman Catholic Church

- The Roman (Western) and Byzantine (Eastern) churches separated by mutual excommunications in 1054
- Various forms of musica organum were used through the 12th century
- From 1100 to 1400, medieval music continued to build upon the foundations of chant and organum
- The church considered harmony as frivolous, impious, and lascivious, as well as an obstruction to the audibility of the words.
- True polyphonic music was actually banned for use in church until 1364



Music in the Reformed Church

- The Reformation triggered a number of sweeping changes in the forms of music used in worship.
- Singing and worship services conducted in common languages rather than Latin
- Congregational singing replaced the ornate music of the Roman Catholic liturgy
- More scripturally based music from the Psalms and New Testament
- Modern notation and music theory led to an explosion of musical forms and content



Modern Presbyterian Worship

- The Presbyterian denomination was formed in 1560 by a Scotsman named John Knox
- Our denomination has evolved a stated liturgy and music guidelines to support our corporate worship of God

To lead the congregation in the singing of prayer is a primary role of the choir and other musicians. They also may pray on behalf of the congregation with introits, responses, and other musical forms. Instrumental music may be a form of prayer since words are not essential to prayer. In worship, music is not to be for entertainment or artistic display. Care should be taken that it not be used merely as a cover for silence. Music as prayer is to be a worthy offering to God on behalf of the people.

*Book Of Order, Directory for Worship
W-2.1004 Music as Prayer: Choir and Instrumental Music*



The Theater of Worship

Danish philosopher and theologian Søren Kierkegaard wrote instructions on how to approach God in worship

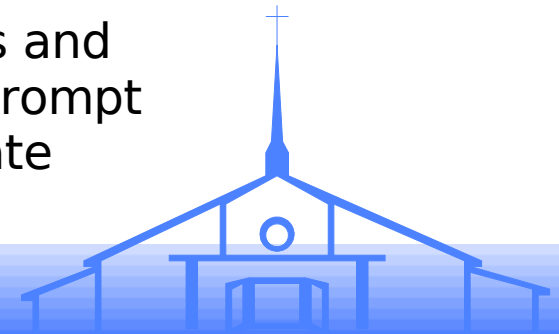
Wrong

- Audience: Congregation
- Actors: Pastor / Choir
- Stage: Church
- Prompter: God

Right

- Audience: God
- Actors: Congregation
- Stage: Eternity
- Prompter: Pastor / Choir

Our role, along with the pastor, is to direct the eyes, hearts and minds of the congregation to the cross of Christ and help prompt their truthful and spirit-filled worship in church to its ultimate completion in service to the world's needs.



What Do We Sing?

The Word is also proclaimed through song in anthems and solos based on scriptural texts, in cantatas and oratorios which tell the biblical story, in psalms and canticles, and in hymns, spirituals, and spiritual songs which present the truth of the biblical faith. Song in worship may also express the response of the people to the Word read, sung, enacted, or proclaimed. ...

*Book Of Order, Directory for Worship
W-2.2008 - Other Forms of Proclamation*

