

## Resources

As worship leaders you will need your own copies or easy access to the hymn books in use in your church(es). The PCC may be able to help you. The music edition is more likely to have indexes to help you choose hymns e.g. thematic, scripture and lectionary indexes.

The following are resources that may help you with choosing hymns, music and songs:

Brown, R., *How Hymns Shape Our Lives* S 78 (Cambridge: Grove Books)  
Church of England, *New Patterns for Worship* (London: Church House, 2002) (Section 5 Music in Worship)

Earey, M., *How to Choose Songs and Hymns for Worship*, W201  
(Cambridge: Grove Books, 2009)

Leach, J., *Thirty Ways to Use Music in Worship* W 209 (Cambridge: Grove Books, 2009)

RSCM *Sunday by Sunday* Magazine <https://www.rscm.com/music-and-resources/our-magazines/planning-worship/sunday-by-sunday-magazine/>

There is lots of helpful material on the internet. For up-to-date links see:

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/lwa-hub/>

### Acknowledgements

Material in this leaflet has been based on:

Diocese of Bath and Wells LWA Course Handouts

Diocese of Salisbury, *Training Course for Lay Worship Leaders* (Diocese of Salisbury)

Bent, H. and L Tipple, *Worship4Today: Part 2* (London: Church House Publishing, 2014)



## Choosing Hymns and Songs

Exploring Worship

12<sup>th</sup> November 2018

## Index

Why Music? .....	3
When to Sing?.....	4
How to Choose Songs and Hymns? .....	5
Final Notes .....	7
No Musician?.....	7
Copyright .....	7
Resources.....	8
Acknowledgements.....	8



Musical notes from <https://pxhere.com/en/photo/1444321>

Finally accept that whatever music you choose won't be universally welcomed or liked! Music is a very personal and evocative event. Individual tastes are always very varied. Corporate worship means that what is good for the whole group cannot always cater for every individual's preferences. If you receive criticism, always reflect on whether you could have done something better and whether you let your own preferences dominate, but don't be bullied into one group's desires at the expense of the rest of the congregation.

### *No Musician?*

If you do not have a musician, do not despair! Music can still be part of the service:

- Listen to music played on a CD player or from You Tube
- Sing a cappella i.e. unaccompanied - find someone musical to start the song in a reasonable pitch
- There are CD's of hymn music to take the place of an instrument (although not everyone finds these helpful).

### *Copyright*

It is illegal to print out hymn or song words without a licence. Many worship songs are covered by a CCLI (Christian Copyright Licencing International) <https://uk.ccli.com/> or a Calamus Licence <https://www.decanimusic.co.uk/calamus-licence/> which your church should purchase if you are not using a commercial hymn book. The copyright licence number must be printed on the service sheet and an annual return made of songs printed.

### The words of the hymns

- Hymns and songs come from different theological traditions. It's good to have a variety of hymn writers and theology in one service, within the range of what is acceptable to your church. If in doubt ask your licenced ministers if a song is acceptable.
- Use the indexes of music versions of hymn books to help find music on a particular theme, scripture passage or lectionary date. But check all the words fit your service pattern.
- If you find a hymn with perfect words but an unknown tune then check the metre. It may be possible to sing the song to a hymn tune that is better known.
- Watch that the same hymns are not sung every week, check the last couple of week's music. Over-used hymns lose their meaning and the congregation lose their energy to sing them.

### The music

- If you don't know much about music talk to your musicians about how to vary metre and key within a service. Four common metre hymns, all in G major, will deaden the service, even if it's difficult to say just why this is the case.
- Choose music to match the tone of the service with a graded mix of quieter, contemplative music and louder joyous songs.
- Do teach new music and help the congregation grow its repertoire but do so gently and interspersed with well-known music. Play a new tune through first, or have someone who knows it sing it through. Play it before the service.
- Make sure the song is pitched at a level everyone can sing. Don't get too ambitious

Do make sure you give musicians enough time to practice the hymns and songs you have chosen!

## Why Music?

Worship, giving honour to God, can happen without music. You may get to lead beautiful contemplative said worship. Adding music provides a different type of praise and beauty to our worship.

Music and song have been central to Jewish and Christian prayer since biblical times. Many of the Psalms probably originated as songs and all were eventually set to music. The temple had permanent musicians to lead people in song (I Chron 6.31-48). In the New Testament, at the end of the Passover, Mark 14:26 says that Jesus sang a hymn. 1 Cor 14:15,26, Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 all mention singing hymns in worship.

Music can aid worship in many ways:

- it engages emotions and expresses them better than said words, whether its adoration, gratitude, thanksgiving, lament or sorrow (Ps 33:2-3, Ps 95:2-3, 2 Sam 1:19-27, 2 Chron 35.25)
- it unites people (c.f. football club songs) so can help transform a congregation into a worshipping community (Ps 98:4-6)
- it changes people. We may not start in praise but praise settles into us as we sing. Music can help the transitions of mood.
- it gets into our souls. We find ourselves singing and recalling God during the week, to compete with the messages of the advertising and secular tunes of the world.
- it gets into our memories. We remember song words better than other things we hear and so we learn our theology

In choosing music it needs to have:

- Sincerity. Music is powerful, and can be used to brainwash or empower. Amos 5:23-24 warns against songs without lifestyle.
- Sensitivity. Inappropriate music can cause harm (Prov 25:20) and turn people away from worship.

## When to Sing?

The Common Worship Communion Service has fairly set places for hymns and songs, alongside any sung liturgy:

- a) **Introit** or Opening Hymn, to draw everyone together, set the tone and theme. Usually it's well-known in a major key to make a positive beginning. It needs to be long enough for a procession.
- b) **Gradual** hymn is traditionally just before the Gospel reading. It provides a response to the readings and preparation for the Gospel. Ideally it reflects the tone and content of the readings.
- c) **Offertory** hymn occurs when the offerings are taken and the table is prepared. Ideally it should be a song of self-offering and/or a reminder of God's grace to us through the sacraments. It needs to be long enough to finish the preparation.
- d) **Final Hymn** (recessional). Like the opening it needs to be a well-known to send people out with confidence to live and tell the story, remind them of the theme and bring the service to a close.

Morning and Evening Prayer gives more freedom in choosing and placing hymns and songs, but the following are suitable slots.

- a) **Opening Hymn** as for the introit above. It may have a different tone if you place it after or before the confession.
- b) **Psalmody**. These are one of the few times when Psalms are still used. A good choir can sing a traditional chant otherwise try a singing or listening to a modern version (see LWA Hub/YouTube).
- c) After the Readings the **Responsory/ Canticles** may be replaced by a song. See guidelines for gradual hymns above.
- d) **Final Hymn** as for final hymn above.

A Service of the Word, as the basis for any informal worship service, gives freedom to have blocks of singing and more songs. A Taizé service, for instance, will be mostly songs.

## How to Choose Hymns and Songs

Sermons and services fade, but hymns and songs, repeatedly sung, become embedded in memory, as dementia sufferers prove. This repetition re-enforces the theology of the songs and lodges them at a deep level. The lasting effect of hymns, along with their power to express emotions and to enhance our encounter with God, makes choosing hymns very significant. The task needs careful consideration.

You may have an organist or music leader choosing your songs. In this case, your task as worship leader is to ensure the chosen songs are well integrated into the flow of the service, and their themes complement the prayers and other elements of the service. However it is always better if you can have some say in what is sung, so that connections with the rest of the service are not forced.

In determining appropriate hymns the following need consideration:

The service theme, which will be affected by:

- The readings, prayers and the preacher's sermon (if there is one) so talk to others involved in the service
- The Church's Year (Advent, Easter season, ordinary time)
- Local events, celebrations or memorials

The local setting

- What can the musicians/ organist play? Talk to them!
- What are the congregation used to singing?
- What words are meaningful to the congregation and ages you will have? (avoid banal songs, theological jargon and doctrine not in keeping with your church, however good the music!)
- How far can you stretch the congregation in gently introducing new music?