

(“Worship 4: Walkthrough” - Addendum)
Reflections: Music as a Support to Worship

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The Lord called me to function as a prophet the same year King Uzziah died. One day while I was worshipping in the Temple, I had a vision of the heavenly Sanctuary. There I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and His Presence filled the place with glory. Above Him and all around Him stood the angels with six wings. With two they covered their face, and with two they covered their feet and with the other two they hovered in space and flew. The angels were singing, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts. The earth is full of His glory.” At the sound of their voices the doors and pillars shook, and the Temple was filled with the smoke of incense.” Isaiah 6:1-4, “The Clear Word” (Paraphrased).

The leadership of corporate worship that is directed to the God of the universe, the Maker of heaven and earth, is a high and holy calling and responsibility. Although Isaiah was called to be God’s spokesperson, he was overwhelmed with a sense of unworthiness. It wasn’t until after the seraph touched him with a live coal from the altar that he was able to respond, “Here am I, send me.” The fruit of true worship is seen afterwards in our service to mankind... we enter to worship. We depart to serve...here am I, send me!

The goals of public worship are to gratefully greet the presence of God, to extol His omnipotence, magnify His omnipresence, and glorify His omniscience. In addition, we humbly receive instructions that should inform how we conduct our lives. While God is EVERYWHERE all the time, He meets us when we gather TOGETHER to receive our offerings of thanksgiving, praise and repentance. The liturgy, a worship formulae that assists in achieving these goals, consists of several parts: The prayers, the read Word, the sung, rung or played Word, gifts of Thanksgiving, and the Word proclaimed. Of these, music is not the least.

Upon receiving the theme for worship from the pastor, it becomes the role of the chief musician to support this theme through the music sung, rung and played. The general rule of learning on any level requires that all facets of the lesson be connected to each other or inextricably intertwined. It therefore becomes vital that the theme of worship is reinforced through the music selected for congregational, choral, vocal solo, or instrumental performance. For example, we have begun an in depth study of the Apostle's Creed. A portion of the creed is lifted for closer scrutiny each week. The Sermon of 2/22 focused on the second attribute of God, "Maker of heaven and earth." The supporting music began with the Prelude "This is My Father's World." Praise was garnered in the Introit (Opening psalm of praise) "Bless the Lord" after which the congregation sang "All Creatures of Our God and King." The other choir renderings were "For the Beauty of the Earth" and "How Great Thou Art."

The congregation's role of praise in music is focused in the hymn. Augustine reminds us that the hymn is a "song of praise sung to God." It is the time when the congregation offers its praise to God by singing together. Luther composed hymns because he recognized the importance of laity participation in the worship. Each hymn is crafted in metric rhyme scheme, and often paraphrases a psalm. Thus, the opening verses of Psalms 23 are paraphrased by H. W Baker and set to a tune composed by John Dykes - "The King of Love my Shepherd is whose goodness faileth never. I nothing lack if I am His, and He is mine forever." Isaac Watts utilized an old Southern Tune for his paraphrase of Psalm 23 - "My Shepherd will supply my need, Jehovah is His name. In pastures fresh He makes me feed Beside the living stream. Composers and lyricists have collaborated over the centuries to supply the church with original themes with fresh scriptural settings for use in denominational hymnals.

In addition composers have set theological texts in anthems for choir use, for hand bell ringing, and for organ use. The multiple instruments of the orchestra have also been employed to add variety and timber to the melodies, old and new of the church. All work together in support of the focus for the day as set forth by the pastor in consultation with the liturgical calendar. First Reformed Church of Cary is truly "blessed and highly favored", rich

with spiritual gifts and abundant in talents. It is the desire of the Music Ministry to utilize all of our musical gifts in worship, especially those of the youth. May God continue to smile on His church as we prepare to serve our fellow humankind after being “lifted high” through the inspiration of meaningful worship.

“When the glory of the Lord fills this holy temple, He will lift us high. And on angel wings we’ll rise to the pure and holy when His Spirit fills this place.” - Gloria and William Gaither, Richard Smallwood