

**A Vision Statement for Music at All Saints Church (part 1):
The Kind of Music to Cultivate**
Tuesday, May 21, 2013

This vision statement regarding music at All Saints Church is intended for congregational, liturgical and fellowship contexts.¹ It is not intended to limit music in non-church contexts or purposes. This document reflects the session's current discussion of "The Kind of Music to Cultivate." There are other considerations that we are still discussing and will report on them as we gain consensus, such as how best to embody a music program in the church, music education, music staff, etc.

The vision for music at All Saints can be described under four key terms: Biblical, Liturgical, Reformational, and Congregational.

Biblical

The music of All Saints should be *biblical*. By biblical we mean robustly biblical in its content and execution. The Bible provides a rich source of content for the discussion of both instrumental and vocal music by professionals and nonprofessionals. It provides justification for choral groups, as well as instrumental groups and all kinds of instruments (Psalm 150). The content of the music, whether implied or supplied through lyrics or words, must conform to biblical truth. The musical style and nonverbal aspects of music must conform to biblical standards of appropriateness and excellence in technical aspects and in the total execution of performing the music. Music in congregational settings should also be executed under the authority and in subjection to the duly appointed church authorities such as the Session or Consistory. By specifying a "biblical" criteria for our music we provide the ultimate foundation limiting the purposes of music (to the glory of God), as well as an expansion of the possibilities of music to many different kinds of music, musical instruments and any use of music that can be properly justified through scriptural exegesis. This means that as we grow to understand more fully what God's Word prescribes, we may alter our practice musically.

Liturgical

The music of All Saints (in the liturgy) should be *liturgical*. By liturgical we mean that the music within the services of worship must conform to the purpose of the worship service. Music can be a great aid to performing the liturgy or a great distraction from it. We understand our Lord's Day worship service to be structured according to the liturgical pattern found in Scripture and evidenced in much of the historic Church's worship. While there are various congregational events in which there would be flexibility for music, the application of music to the Lord's Day, Word-Sacrament service, should conform to the liturgical order. The music, in verbal and nonverbal aspects, must support the function of the liturgy. The criterion of music being *liturgical* means that music (in the liturgy) should not be performed for other purposes than to serve the liturgical event happening in that section of the service. Since our liturgy proceeds

¹ To substantiate the biblical claims in this document see Worship and Worship Services (130 pages) by Gregg Strawbridge, revised in 2005, available at: <http://www.wordmp3.com/details.aspx?id=1243>

through five major sequences (Call, Confession, Consecration, Communion, Commission) with subsequences within, music must carefully support and express the function and purpose of that aspect of the liturgy.

Thus, music selected must appropriately express the function of worship during that aspect of liturgy and not draw attention to itself or become an end in itself. While many worship services in the broader evangelical world have places for a direct performance, complete with applause, there is no such event in our liturgy. Music that is liturgically focused is not performance-oriented and does not seek its own attention as a performance. Liturgical music also supports and functions within the Church Year seasons (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter Ascension, Pentecost) and is appropriate to the season, as well as being appropriate to the section of the liturgy that it serves.

Reformational

The music of All Saints should be *Reformational*. All Saints is a Reformational Church by description, conviction and creed. When we apply the descriptor of Reformational to music we mean “Reformed” in both its historical sense and in the ongoing action of reformation. We should utilize Reformation-era music and also recover the activities of our Reforming fathers, as well as continue their work of reformation in music today. The key components in the arena of church music that were added during the time of the Reformation include a recovery of congregational singing, the singing of the Psalms, and in the Lutheran wing of the Reformation, a high view of musical art. We should value the music of the Reformation, that is Reformation era hymnody and psalmody to remember our roots, but we also should stand upon the shoulders of the Reformers by building upon their insights. Following their example we will apply singing the Word in our culture, refining and expanding our musical repertoire to be more inclusive and eclectic.² For example the Cantus Christi hymnal provides a rich resource of Reformation-era hymnody in psalmody, but it does not provide a version of each of the 150 Psalms, nor all of the text of all the Psalms it contains. An additional step that we should take is to fill out the The Psalter by the inclusion of all 150 Psalms. We should seek to reach into the depths of Reformation hymnody to recover much of the doctrinally rich, liturgically functional and literarily robust music of the Reformation.

Congregational

Our music should be *congregational*. Congregationally-focused music seeks to edify and engage, in the fullest possible way, congregational participation. Prior to the Reformation only the clergy participated in chanting hymns and songs and the laity was often musically silent. By a congregationally-focused approach to music we do not anticipate raising a professional class of musicians *to do* the music for the congregation. Rather any professional leader in congregational music should aim to buildup and engage the Body of Christ at the fullest level of participation. This would include training young members of the congregation to participate musically, both instrumentally and

² Luther, for example, used folk tunes for his hymns, as well as refining chant tunes for hymns. The music of Goudimel evidences the use of the developing musical arts of his day (in the “Renaissance” style).

vocally, and to seek to engage appropriately musicians at all stages and ages of development. The biblical injunction in both Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3 makes clear the New Testament emphasis that the “one another's” of the congregation sing, teach, counsel and speak to one another with Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. The ethos of a congregationally-focused music program would be much less on performance and much more on the involvement of a diverse collection of people in music ministry.

Applications of our Music Vision

To more fully embody this vision in worship, we should begin developing an additional supplement to our hymnal, which includes the following: 1) a portion and version of each of the 150 Psalms, 2) additional liturgical resources such as “service” music appropriate to our congregation (e.g., a sung version of Kyrie, Sanctus, the Sursam Corda, Benedictions, etc.), and 3) a collection of hymns which more fully express the Church Year’s seasons including the Lenten season which has no explicit examples in the Cantus.

In light of the above principles we should begin developing an additional hymnal. Practically, the session has determined to do this for Pentecost (with about 40 songs), then produce another for Advent-Lent. If we do this for a couple of years, then we could easily learn, “test-drive” and refine another 100 or so musical selections within the next year.

In such an additional hymnal, in light of the above principles, we should add traditional hymns and beloved Gospel Songs, Scriptural songs in contemporary music style, modern hymn settings, and modern/ancient service music.

The sources for such music should be primarily the musicians within our Reformation-minded churches, such as Greg Wilbur (PCA), Mark Reagan (CREC), Michael Owens (Reformed Baptist), David Erb (CREC), Darwin Jordan (PCA), etc. It is evident in the history of revivals, that every time God’s Spirit takes hold of a group of people new music and new musical forms arise. Therefore we should expect if we embody a vision of music that is fully Spirit-empowered and biblically truthful, that there would be new creations and compositions musically. Thus we should also utilize All Saints musical talent and cultivate our own musical expressions, e.g., to sing a new song (Psalm 98). In other words one of our tasks could simply be to write and compose music from within our congregation utilizing the congregational resources we have including use an older more experienced musicians and younger musicians.