

Top 5 Trends of Music Ministry and Related Recommendations

Values from External Interviews

The underlying theme that we found is, in the words of Eric Mathis, “There is no trend. Music ministry is localized—each church has its niche.” However, we did find some common threads in our interviews in the categories of music ministry staffing, education, technology, and ensembles as well as musical styles present in both congregations and choirs. These threads indicated a bias for nurturing of community, faith formation and ministry enhancement over an emphasis on impressive performance.

1. **Staffing trend:** There are a variety of staffing models present in churches with a music ministry. Ministers of music can serve in either a FT or PT capacity and related staff such as music administrators, organists, and others do the same. Interns and scholarship recipients are becoming more prevalent in music ministry.

Recommendation/value: Most of the music ministers we spoke to have a bias for a FT minister of music if this can be afforded by the church.

2. **Education/preparation trend:** There are not as many church music directors who have received “dual training” in both music and theology as in the past (because of the lack of degrees that used to be offered at seminaries), but there are a few out there with this training.

Recommendation/value: Several of the interviewees suggested we find a director with a Master of Sacred Music (MSM) or Master of Church Music (MCM). Individuals with this type of training are prepared for the role of music in a theological context. A “Pastoral” musician is more effective for music ministry than a “director” or “technician.”

3. **Technology trend:** Technology is used in every phase of music ministry including services, rehearsals, recruiting choir and ensemble members through robust websites, and tracking of music. Downloading music for both choirs and congregations from music sites is also a popular alternative to the traditional hymnal. In the words of Deb Loftis: “Technology (in music ministry) is here to stay.”

Recommendation/value: The use of technology in our music ministry should be appropriate for our congregation and enhance our worship experiences.

4. **Trends in choirs and ensembles:** There is a diversity of ensembles present in churches for all age groups. These groups tend to be “organic” and grow from the musical interests of the church. (We heard examples from a ukulele choir to a full orchestra.) Also, there is less weight put on the adult or chancel choir to provide music every Sunday. Sharing this responsibility was mentioned several times in our interviews. Lastly, it is difficult to attract young adult singers for chancel choirs.

Recommendation/value: Authentic and local/organic describe the most effective music ministries. Music education is still an important value tended through various models/methods.

5. **Trend regarding musical styles for worship:** There is a variety of musical styles available for both choirs and congregations in today’s worship. There are not just two choices, such as “traditional or contemporary,” but many more and often present in the same venue.

Recommendation/value: Today’s churches need to expand their “musical bandwidth”—that is, add to their offerings of musical styles and formats. We foresee continuing to expand our musical bandwidth as Ken Wilson did during his music ministry.