



FORMATION

PLANNING FOR WORSHIP

Since we are first and foremost servants, the way we plan needs to reflect a servant attitude towards the needs of our congregation. Personal preference and style choices need to be put aside in order to best serve the congregation.

As you start planning, determine whether the song choices will be made by the corps officers/pastors, the worship team, or if it will be a shared responsibility. Your corps officers/pastors have been appointed as the spiritual leaders of your church and it is important to foster a good working relationship with them.

As you start selecting music, you need to be aware of the demographics of the congregation. Aim to serve all age groups represented.

Determine if there is a theme for the service. Is it a special focus Sunday, like Thanksgiving or a Senior Soldier Renewal? Is the officer/pastor speaking on a certain topic, such as holiness or repentance? A theme can drive the choices for songs, Scripture and transitions.

Prayer is key as you plan the worship of God's people

Figure out if you are planning an open or closed set. An open set will have songs that relate to the theme or particular elements of the service (eg. a dedication). A closed set will have songs that relate to one another, but not necessarily to a theme or event in the service. It aims to give the congregation a short time focused on a particular thought (eg. God's provision).

Place musical sets in the service where they help with the overall flow. Perhaps an upbeat chorus can help facilitate movement that may have to happen on the platform. A devotional style chorus can lead into a prayer time or the message.

People will come to worship with a variety of different feelings. You need to make sure you have a balance between upbeat and joyful songs and slow, reflective songs. A mix of tempos and atmosphere you present to the congregation will assist each person to meet with God where they are at.

Repetition of songs is important for congregational learning, but excessive repetition can quickly become frustrating, making worship stale and lifeless.

It is important to work with other music leaders at your corps. Try to find opportunities for blended worship with musical sections working together. This can be a great way to promote unity in worship, reduce "competition" between groups and provide musical diversity.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths. Proverbs 3 : 5-6 KJV

HOW TO CHOOSE NEW SONGS

Congregations interact with God through the music we present. New songs can give energy and life to congregational worship. Songs that are new are not just the ones most recently written. A new song could be an older song that is new to your congregation. It can be difficult to introduce new music to worship because of independent factors that are specific to individual congregations.

The first thing to consider when choosing a new song is whether the lyrics have sound theology. You put praise on the lips of God's people as you lead them in worship. It is important that the lyrics they are singing are scripturally correct and fit within our doctrine.

While the lyrics are the most important part of a worship song, the melody carries those lyrics. It must be "sing-able." Make sure that the rhythms used in the melody are easily sung. Big intervals can be difficult for congregations to grasp and can hinder their participation. You don't need to avoid these types of songs all the time. You just need to be aware that they may take longer to learn. You may even need to adapt some of these rhythms or intervals to make the song more accessible.

Make sure that the song is in an appropriate key. Check that the pitch of the melody is not too high or low. Look at where the melody is most often sung during the song and be aware of the pitch you are asking the congregation to sing for a prolonged time. Make sure this is in a comfortable register. When you are listening to recordings of worship songs, remember that they are being presented by professional singers. Most of our congregations are not filled with people with this type of vocal range. You will likely need to change the key for congregational use. This will allow any singer in your congregation to be involved, no matter their level of ability.

Be aware of how much new music you are asking your congregation to sing. If they are always learning something new, their opportunity to engage deeply in worship can be limited.

Choose three or four songs (or whatever number works for your congregation) through a season that can be added to the collection of music you already use.

Start becoming more aware of how often you use specific songs. Does your congregation need a new upbeat song or are they just getting comfortable with the ones you have introduced?

Be aware of what is happening in the congregation. Are the lyrics poignant to a situation in your church's life? Will singing this song be beneficial to nurture the congregation? Are they participating? How are they reacting to new songs when they are presented?

**Sing a new
song to the
LORD! Let the
whole earth
sing to the
LORD!
Psalm 96 : 1 NLT**

REHEARSAL PLANNING

After you have planned the material for your worship time, be sure to make a plan for your rehearsal.

A good rehearsal plan will allow time to cover the music you need to learn right away, but also ensures that you leave time to work on other repertoire. This can be new songs you want to use in the future or revising songs you have done in the past. This gives you a broader base of songs that your team is comfortable with. As well, it is helpful when you are called upon to present a song that you have not rehearsed for a particular service.

Start and end your rehearsal with a piece that is familiar. This helps your team ease into your practice time and get focused. Ending with a familiar piece establishes a sense of accomplishment. Warm up and tuning for individual instruments should be done before the group comes together to practice.



Rehearsal time is where communication with your group members is easiest. Face to face communication about logistics (eg. dates, times, places) is very effective, but this communication should also be followed up with emails or texts.

Where possible, find a regular rehearsal time that works for your group. Avoid always scheduling your rehearsal right before your worship times. A run through and a rehearsal are not the same thing.

Any musical section can function as a small group for members. Rehearsals should allow time for devotions, prayer and support. Rehearsal time is an ideal place to cultivate a sense of community in your group.

It is important to identify the difference between a



Rehearsal

- > Breaking the song into different sections
- > Picking keys
- > Refining transitions
- > Deciding tempo, rhythm, style
- > Focused time to arrange songs

Run Through

- > Playing a piece through to make sure you know it
- > Correct mistakes as they are noticed
- > Limited time to make sure songs work

VERBAL TRANSITIONS

The **QUALITY** and **QUANTITY** of what you say in worship is important.

A time of worship will often require you to lead verbally, outside the confines of a song. What and how much you say in these times can have a significant impact on the hearts of those who hear.

Here are some tools for verbal transitions:

Memorize Scripture - Using Bible verses that songs are based on, or Scripture that reflects the theme of the service, can make for effective transitions between songs.

Pray - Worship songs are often prayers. The breaks in the music provide an opportunity for spoken prayer.

Personal Testimony - If a song speaks to a particular experience in your life, share that testimony as an affirmation of what the song expresses. Being open and honest with your congregation makes you more genuine and approachable.

Videos - Using a video that tells a story, or displaying Scripture that relates to the songs, can provide a different transition. Be sure you've worked this out with your technical support team. A smooth transition is important to keep the flow and avoid distractions.

Leading a congregation can be daunting. If you are not yet comfortable speaking in front of your congregation, or you tend to wander from the point, write out what you will say. Avoid rambling or making your spoken introductions only about yourself.

Just as you practice the music, you should also practice and review what you are going to say. This can be done by audio or video recording yourself and reviewing it after. Practicing your verbal transitions in rehearsal can also help your team be sensitive and aware of what you are doing.

It is important to engage with the congregation. Even if you choose to write out what you will say, look up and make eye contact with them as much as possible. Be aware that they are there and make them feel a part of what is presently happening. They are not just a spectator to your worship.

If little things go wrong musically, or you feel unsure about something, avoid talking about that to the congregation. It draws attention to those things and away from our worship of God.

MUSICAL TRANSITIONS

Musical transitions require planning and practice. A solid understanding of music theory will be helpful as you plan and navigate transitions.

Here are some tools for musical transitions:

Selecting Keys - If possible, either select songs that are in the same key or take the songs you've chosen and put them in the same key. Be very careful to check what this does to the melodic range. It may put a song in a register that is way too high or low for congregations to sing comfortably.

Key Changes - When it is not possible to put your chosen songs in the same key, there are techniques that can be used to change key without stopping between songs. Using relative keys or playing the dominant chord of a new key as a transition chord are some of the methods you can try.

Manage Tempo Changes - The leader and members of the rhythm section need to communicate effectively when there are changes to the tempo of songs. Changing the tempo during the last section of the initial song can help establish the tempo for the next song. A prolonged chord held by some instruments and a rhythmic drive into a new tempo can also provide a tempo change.



Ambient Sounds - At the end of an initial song, synthesizer or pad sounds played on a keyboard or guitar can provide space in the music and allow a new song to be established. These sounds should have less melodic features and more background presence.

Using "Hooks" from Songs - Elements of one song can be incorporated into another to establish a transition. This could be a melodic line, a chord progression or a rhythmic pattern. These elements are an audible cue for the congregation that the song is changing.

Just Switch - Sometimes, there is no musical element that can tie two songs together effectively. Even some key changes can sound awkward. When this occurs, it is okay to finish one song and start the next one.

It is important to **PLAN** and **PRACTICE** your musical transitions.

THE OTHER STUFF THAT'S NOT MUSIC

There are other factors to consider in supporting your group as they lead the congregation. The most important is the words on screen. These need to be large enough to read and presented in a clear font. While it may be nice to add color and pictures to some of your slides, if it distracts from the lyrics, then it will distract from the singing and the opportunity to engage in worship.

Be sure the displayed slides change ahead of time so there is an awareness of what is coming next and lyrics aren't missed. People will sing more confidently if you can time this well.

Have your words/slides in the order you will sing them. Jumping back and forth between slides is sometimes required. Be sure the person operating the words on screen can see the worship leader's gestures, or hear their instructions, to indicate which set of words should come next. It is ideal if the person who is changing words on screen is a part of your team and rehearses with you. It will help make this part of the service as seamless as possible.

Personal equipment, such as amplifiers and instruments, are the responsibility of the owner to ensure they are cared for and kept in working order. There is other equipment that your group will use regularly that they should know how to care for. For example, cables, stage monitors, microphones and stands are all essential to the effectiveness of your group. Ideally, you should have a person on your team that can help you look after all of this equipment and teach the team to do the same.

Understanding how to communicate with your sound technician is vital when it comes to hearing yourself on stage. A monitor mix is designed to help your team hear themselves while playing. This can sound totally different from what the congregation is hearing. Working with your sound technician in rehearsal is the best way to deal with this, before you have the added responsibility of leading the congregation.

Using a microphone properly is important. Be aware of the type of microphones at your ministry unit and the correct way to use them.

AUDIO/VISUAL technicians need to be a part of worship team rehearsals. They are part of the team and therefore are part of leading the congregation in worship.