

Brief Advice on Providing Music for Each Generation in Your Church

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Are you a worship leader who frequently asks, *How can I put together a well-balanced assortment of songs for a worship service?* Doing this is not as easy as one may think. There are so many questions running through your mind: *Should I medley these songs? In what key should I put this one song? How much time do we have to sing on this particular day? Does the congregation know this song?* And the list goes on and on.

Consider the following points that will help make your work easier.

1. Your selection of songs for a service should consider the following:

- a. Identification—WHO WE ARE (meaning who is your congregation)
- b. Show thankfulness for WHAT GOD HAS DONE
- c. Praise God for WHO GOD IS (Holy, Creator, Omnipotent, Loving, Sustainer)

The length of praise and worship is dictated by the guidelines of the local assembly/congregation under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Remember to always work in harmony with the pastor (and as relevant, others who will preach in your church) regarding the selection and length of songs.

2. Consider this “sample” list of the types of songs that cover the principles given at number one. The list does not attempt to be all-inclusive.

Songs of personal experience or testimony

“I’m a Solider”/“Look Where He Brought Me From”/“Lift Every Voice and Sing”

Songs of Thanksgiving

“Thank You, Lord”/“Have You Tried Jesus?”/“Can’t Nobody Do Me Like Jesus”

Songs of Praise

“God Is Great”/“O Magnify the Lord”/“What a Mighty God We Serve”

Songs of Worship

“We Have Come into This House”/“Welcome, into This Place”/“Hallelujah/Holy, Holy, Holy,”/“I Worship You Almighty God”

3. You may be in a more traditional church where praise and worship hasn’t been thoroughly introduced to your congregation. If so, here are a few hymns of worship you can use. Of course, there are hundreds of other selections. Please visit the music and worship area of The African American Lectionary for more suggestions.

Traditionally hymns are sung before the sermon and are sometimes called the “hymn of the hour.” Why not open the service with a great anthem such as “Crown Him with Many Crowns.”

All Creatures of Our God and King	<i>Assisi, Geistliche Kirchengesange</i>
All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name	<i>Perronet, Ellor</i>
Amazing Grace	<i>John Newton, John P. Rees, trad American mel</i>
And Can It Be?	<i>Charles Wesley, Thomas Campbell</i>
Angels We Have Heard on High	<i>traditional French carol</i>
Be Still, My Soul	<i>Katharina Von Schlegel, Jean Sibelius</i>
Be Thou My Vision	<i>traditional Irish hymn</i>
Blessed Assurance	<i>Fanny J. Crosby, Phoebe K. Knapp</i>
Christ the Lord Is Risen Today	<i>Charles Wesley, Lyra Davidica</i>
Come, Christians, Join to Sing	<i>Bateman, traditional Spanish</i>
Come, Thou Almighty King	<i>Anonymous, Felice de Giardini</i>
Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing	<i>Robert Robinson, traditional American melody</i>
Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy	<i>Hart</i>
Crown Him with Many Crowns	<i>Bridges, Thring, Elvey</i>
Fairest Lord Jesus	<i>Munster Gesangbuch, Crusader's Hymn</i>
Grace Greater Than Our Sin	<i>Julia H. Johnston, Daniel B. Towner</i>
Great Is Thy Faithfulness	<i>Thomas O. Chisholm, William M. Runyan</i>
Have Thine Own Way, Lord	<i>Pollard, Stebbins</i>
He Hideth My Soul	<i>Crosby, Kirkpatrick</i>
Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty	<i>Reginald Heber, John B. Dykes</i>
How Firm a Foundation	<i>Joseph Funk, John Rippon</i>
How Great Thou Art	<i>Stuart K. Hine</i>
I Need Thee Every Hour	<i>Hawks, Lowry</i>
I Sing the Mighty Power of God	<i>Watts, Gesangbuch der Herzog</i>
I Surrender All	<i>J.W. VanDeventer, W.S. Weeden</i>
Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise	<i>Walter Chalmers Smith, trad. Welsh hymn melody</i>
It Is Well with My Soul	<i>Horatio G. Spafford, Phillip P. Bliss</i>
Jesus Paid It All	<i>Elvina M. Hall, John T. Grape</i>
Joy to the World!	<i>Isaac Watts, George Frederick Handel</i>
Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee	<i>Henry van Dyke, Ludwig van Beethoven</i>
Just as I Am	<i>Elliott, Bradbury</i>
A Mighty Fortress Is Our God	<i>Martin Luther</i>
My Faith Has Found a Resting Place	<i>Edmunds, Norwegian Folk melody</i>
My Jesus, I Love Thee	<i>William R. Featherston, Adoniram J. Gordon</i>
My Savior's Love	<i>Charles H. Gabriel</i>
Nothing but the Blood of Jesus	<i>Robert Lowry</i>
O Come, All Ye Faithful	<i>Latin hymn, John Francis Wade</i>
O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing	<i>Charles Wesley, Carl G. Glazer</i>
O God, Our Help in Ages Past	<i>Isaac Watts, William Croft</i>
O Sacred Head, Now Wounded	<i>Paul Gebhardt, Hans Leo Hassler</i>
O Worship the King	<i>Grant, W. Gardiner's Sacred Melodies, Haydn</i>
Our Great Savior	<i>J. Wilbur Chapman, Rowland H. Prichard</i>

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty
Rejoice, the Lord Is King
Revive Us Again
Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us
Silent Night! Holy Night!
The Solid Rock
Take My Life and Let It Be
There Is a Fountain
'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus
To God Be the Glory
What a Friend We Have in Jesus
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

Neander, Stralsund Gesangbuch
Charles Wesley, John Darwall
William P. Mackay, John J. Husband
Dorothy A. Thrupp, William B. Bradbury
Joseph Mohr, Franz Gruber
Edward Mote, William B. Bradbury
Frances Havergal, Henry R. C. Malan
William Cowper, traditional American melody
Stead, Kirkpatrick
Fanny J. Crosby, William H. Doane
Joseph M. Scriven, Charles C. Converse
Newton, Watts, Gregorian Chant

4. Incorporate generations. Perhaps you have a setting where the deacons are in charge of opening worship (typically called devotion). Here is a way to incorporate newer and older styles of worship. Once devotion is over, you can greet the congregation and ask them to stand up and greet each other. While they are greeting each other, you can sing modern songs such as:

- a. I Need You to Survive (Hezekiah Walker)
- b. Smile (Kirk Franklin)
- c. Lord You Are Good (Israel Houghton)

The key is to be intentional during your time of worship. You want to meet the needs of every generation while preserving the heritage of your church music. If you intentionally try to meet the generational needs of your entire congregation as often as possible, they will notice, and they will appreciate your efforts. The more that you are intentional, the more that you will come up with great ideas. It's a big task but I hope these suggestions will make it easier for you!