

The Role Of A Church Musician

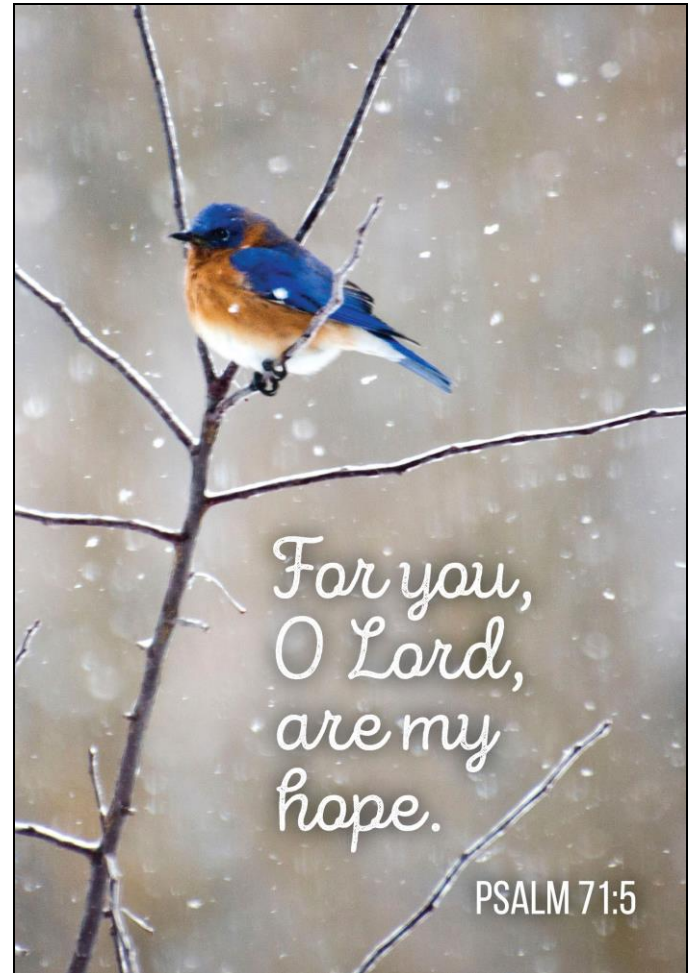
By Don Ober

What is the role of a church musician and what exactly is our obligation to God and the church? Over the years of doing this, I have often thought long and hard about that.

The very first thing I would start out by saying is this simple statement: we are not there to entertain, and if that is the goal, we are most definitely on the wrong track! But that does not mean our goal should not be to move people emotionally. Music is a very powerful medium and that power can be used for good, and we have certainly seen socially and secularly, that this power can be abused as well.

I believe our goal and purpose should be to till the field before the preacher of the day brings forth a message from the Lord. It has long been my purpose in doing this, to use music to help seasoned Christians sing out praises to the Lord. Praising God is not a suggestion, it is a command for us to do so! I would go even further, if the people of the church do not feel a need to praise God, then that church has some serious issues to face.

At the same time though, any church musician who has done this for any length of time, knows, full well, not everybody who will be listening to their music is a seasoned Christian and many of those listening, are either new in the faith or may even be merely searching and have not yet made a decision. I am well aware our service is broadcasted on the internet to God only knows! When I say "till the field," I am trying to explain the mission as a farmer would. If we as musicians can move a person emotionally, before the preacher even speaks a word, that listener has a greater chance of gaining from the insight of God's word as presented by that speaker. In that case, the



ground has been prepared and only then can the seed hope to take hold in the soil. If the listener is half asleep before the speaker ever says a word, they may never move past being a searcher. The sermon is only second to the actual reading of the word of God! The church musician is not at all the primary focus, which is why I resist the term "entertain" so personally.

The church musician is also a part of the teaching of the church. It may again seem like we only play music to move the spirit at best, and entertain at worst, but there are other issues that are very important. The lyrics of songs are discussed, debated and thought about in regard to what is good teaching today and what is bad teaching. I could go on a rant

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“A Church Musician,” continued...

here of very poor lyrics in some of today's popular so called “Christian songs,” but I will simply say that we take the responsibility seriously. That is not to say all popular praise songs of today are bad, many have a very godly purpose. There are even quite a few that we sing on a regular basis that are taken directly from God's word. The song “The Blessing” comes to mind.

The planning of a church service begins with a musician preparing an order of songs for a specific purpose in the order. We may look for a rather simple praise song, upbeat in character to begin a service to wake up the congregation and prepare them for what is to come. As we go down the list of songs we choose, the message may become deeper and at times more solemn, again, hopefully preparing the congregation for a message from the Word of God. I openly admit, I personally get annoyed by “dead time” in a set. Some of this may be due to my experience in entertainment, where “dead air” as they call it, is a killer to a good flow. However, that does not mean I am reverting to “the entertainer.” To me, “dead air” within a service is akin to the farmer stopping in the middle of his row while tilling the field, moving his tractor to a different location and beginning again. Dead air can interfere with my stated purpose to prepare the hearts and soul of those worshipping for a greater acceptance of the message for that day.

I will end by saying this: we try hard, fail often, but never take the responsibility lightly. Entertaining would be far easier than providing proper worship to a great God and preparing the listener, whoever it may be, to rise to greater heights of understanding God's Word, as presented by the reading of God's Word and the sermon.

**Happy Birthday!**

Blessings to all who celebrate a birthday this month. May you feel the love, joy and presence of the Lord as we all celebrate your special day with prayers and warmest wishes.

Helen Cull	February 3
Xueliang Yang	February 6
Tom Taylor	February 16
Sandy Ober	February 17
Ella Bernheisel	February 21
George Hill	February 24

Perisseia

Our women's growth group will begin a winter series on Thursday evening, February 13. We will be looking at the themes in the Epistle to the Hebrews and how those themes can speak to our faith walk in today's world. This series will be remote, via Zoom.

All women are welcome, and no commitment or preparation is expected. If you have not participated in Perisseia before and would like to join this series, please contact Cindy Bills cynthialbills@gmail.com.

11th Hour

Our adult Sunday School Class will begin a study of the Epistle of James in early March. Stay tuned for details!

Elders' Corner

By Ed MacQueen

Greetings in Jesus' name. I pray your new year is off to a great start. May He who began a good work in you complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it!

As elders we have been focused recently on crafting the new budget, praying for the present needs of the church, and praying for the direction of our body in 2025! The pastoral search team continues its ongoing task of interviewing, assessing and praying as they seek God's will for our pastorship.

As elders we are grateful for all the guest preachers who have filled our pulpit over the last year. Special thanks to Pastor Joshua who has filled in several times, and sometimes at short notice! Beginning in February we will also have guest preaching from Trinity International Christian Church, the E-Free Indian/Pakistani fellowship from Philadelphia with whom we have teamed up from time to time over the past five years. On the Sundays when they will be preaching, they will also bring some families from their church, so it will be like a joint worship service of sorts. We appreciate their willingness to serve our body in this way and look forward to our times together.

February also means it is time to begin preparing our annual Easter Egg Hunt. Please stay tuned for announcements and opportunities to serve during this significant event. I pray God will use our efforts to spread his good news and add to our body!

In Christ,
Ed

The greatest evils in the world will not be carried out by men with guns, but by men in suits sitting behind desks.

C.S. Lewis



**The LORD
is my
strength
and my
song;
he has
become
my
salvation.**

Exodus 15:2, NIV

Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Further Up and Further In

Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in and among us



By Cindy Bills

Love in February

February is a rather dreary month, which most likely contributes to the attention given to Valentine's day. As a celebration of romantic love, Valentine's Day in February leaves something to be desired. February is generally chilly and damp—not ideal for romantic walks and picnics! Why do we celebrate Valentine's Day in February? And is it only about romantic love? A very brief look at ancient history will help us understand a bit about how we got here.

St. Valentine was a priest or bishop who lived in Italy in the third century. He is known for his efforts to evangelize folks in the Roman Empire and his ministry to believers who were being persecuted by the Roman government. While visiting Rome, he was arrested for evangelizing, tortured, and executed. According to our sources, Valentine died on February 14.

If we return to Valentine's Day, 2025, we have a couple of things to consider. While the focus of modern Valentine's Day (and even in history) has been on romantic love, St. Valentine himself is remembered for the agape God-love that he manifested to believers and nonbelievers alike. Both romantic love and agape love have value, but it is easy to argue that agape love is the more significant and eternal. The good news is that we can pursue and exercise our "love muscles" in both directions, taking time to love a special someone in a special way even as we pursue loving others as Christ loves them.

The calendar position of Valentine's Day need not be disappointing or frustrating. It can be an invitation to recognize that all forms of love are from God and go beyond circumstances. Love is not confined to warm, sunny days. We can love in all circumstances, all weather. May we know the joy of the Lord as we do so.

Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557) or cynthialbills@gmail.com to continue the dialogue....

Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen.

1 John 4:20

Financial Update

(Through December 31, 2024)

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want..."

	Actual	Budget
Income	\$147,153	\$178,000
Expense	\$130,715	\$178,000
Total giving in December was \$33,329, praise God!		

If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:

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