

IMPACT Music Ministry

Dear members of Synod, dear sisters and brothers in Christ. With the departure of Pastor Rolf Schmidt to the United States, I have been asked to take over the Theological Leadership of the IMPACT Music Ministry and tasked with presenting a brief report to Church Synod. I have been both privileged and blessed to be part of IMPACT Music Ministry since it officially gained representation in our Church in 2007. To many this may have sounded as though it was something “new” that had been introduced into our Church. But in reality, this was never so. Contemporary music always “happened” in our Church and it has always been present in our Church life as far as I can remember... just not in an “official way” I suppose. From my earliest childhood memories I can remember that there were always those special moments, when a few family members gathered around a harmonium or a piano with the diverse combination of wind, brass, string instruments and voices, to play songs of praise and worship from the “Missionsharfe” or the first edition of the four-part version of “Jesu Name.” The same thing “happened” at nativity plays held in our Church services, at concerts in our schools, at youth gatherings, Church camps, Old Age Homes, Hospitals and at outreaches to this very day. The characteristic of this music ministry being, that this “joyful noise” just comes into being, when two or three gather in His name, often with a rich diversity of instruments and voices, to give praise to God.

Since then, the availability of excellent four-part music for Church use has just exploded... Over and above the rich tradition of Lutheran hymns, there is now a whole host of contemporary music available, which has proven extremely useful and valuable for Lutheran worship and that many of our congregations are coming to appreciate and use. Some of the most popular writers being:

1. Keith & Kristyn Getty (UK/Northern Ireland), pioneers of the “modern hymn movement.” They are best known for songs like: In Christ Alone, He Will Hold Me Fast, etc. Getty Music regularly produces resources for choirs and congregations.
2. Matt Papa and Matt Boswell often collaborate with the Gettys, producing music with a strong doctrinal focus accessible for church use.
3. CityAlight is an Evangelical Anglican church-based group known for songs like; Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me, or, Only a Holy God. Their songs are musically simple, lyrically rich, and excellent for congregational and choral adaptation. And there are many more.

Perhaps the most beautiful aspect of this music is its inclusiveness; it draws on the various giftings that are available in a congregation, creates a platform for a rich diversity of instruments, music styles, genres and cultural preferences, and invites the Holy Spirit to turn this music into a wonderful unison of praise for our inclusive Church worship.

I find it quite difficult to compile a report that will do justice to what is happening in our congregations in this regard, as most congregations have been drawing on resources that work best for their size, specific mix of gifts and instruments. Each congregation has had to draw on the music that they are able to play and accompany well with their specific team. This makes each music team unique. And so, to have a common pool of music, the IMPACT Music Committee was established, to facilitate workshops, at which music can be exchanged, practiced together and introduced into the respective

congregations. Two such music workshops are planned for each year, and if possible, a music festival, at which musicians from most congregations are encouraged to partake.

Those who are involved in a music team will know, that this is a ministry that grows out of a fellowship of believers who love our Lord, care about his family, the Church, have a passion for music and who are committed to practice and play regularly. All eyes and hearts need to remain focused on serving Christ, as this is not the place for self-education, for rivalry or bruised egos, if we are to serve God in this ministry effectively.

The theme for this Church Synod is an appropriate one; “Rooted and Re-Forming.” In the Bible we are repeatedly instructed to “Sing to the Lord a new song. (Psalm 98v1;149v1; 33v3; Isaiah 42v10; Revelations 5v9). I firmly believe that this music ministry has an important role to play in helping our Church and our congregations to do exactly that; to sing “a new song to the Lord.” In the invitation letter to this synod, we are told: “The church is called to adapt and discover new ways to serve, yet the Gospel remains our constant foundation. Relevance in today’s world does not require altering our core message. Our mission is, and always will be, to proclaim Jesus Christ and His message — yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). We believe in a living God who continues to act in history and speaks into the evolving challenges of each generation. To be rooted in faith does not mean standing still; it means engaging today’s questions with the timeless truth of the Gospel.”

(Manfred Müller-Nedebock)