

REPORT ON CHURCH MUSIC IN GENERAL IN OUR ELKSA (N-T) 2015

The Church Music in our Synod can be categorised into 3 main streams: Brass Band Association, Choir Association and Contemporary Worship Music. Although not all streams are developing in every congregation in our Synod, it is evident that each congregation is blessed with talented musicians who make music in different music genres and styles, ALL to the GLORY OF GOD. The diversity of music development therefore finds unity in the fact that all musicians employ their God-given talents in their congregations (and beyond i.e. Choir/Brass Festivals) as part of services and congregational life.

The Brass Band and Choir Association Festivals alternate every year and are highlights on the brass and singing calendar. It is a privilege to be part of these festivities and the motivation is enhanced to sing and play brass instruments in our home congregations, where these music groups are present. Developments and challenges of these 2 streams can be found in their individual reports, submitted by their respective Leaders.

Although the Contemporary Worship Music is developing well and very differently from congregation to congregation, as well as between different circuits, this 'stream' has made strides across congregational boundaries since 2007 in the Southern Circuit. Regular workshops were organised by a steering committee (2010) headed by Pastor Dieter Klee and this was supported by numerous congregations and individual members of FELSISA: repertoires were built up, musical skills developed and new modern hymns/songs were introduced (Robin Mann, Stuart Townend, Robin Mark, Graham Kendrick etc.)

The first Contemporary Music Festival was held on the 17 August 2014 – it was a wonderful service attended by musicians from most congregations in the Southern Circuit. The Committee is indeed grateful to Synod, for the progress made in acknowledging this relatively new stream and they hope to build inter-congregational ties to other circuits.

In June 2015 a questionnaire was sent out to all congregations to ascertain what is happening on the Church Music front (besides the classical music only, as in the past). Unfortunately only a few congregations in the Southern and Eastern Circuits responded, but it was nevertheless interesting to note that vocalists and guitarists have been introduced by all as well as the use of the data projector as a means to learn new contemporary songs/hymns. Other song-sources include CD's, Emmaus Book, Mission Praise, Jesu Name, Sein Ruhm unsere Freude, Unser Liederbuch. Pianists, keyboard-, recorder- and flute-players (sometimes drummers with their drum-box/drum kit) meet on a regular basis to prepare for upcoming services. The wish has been expressed that the well-supported workshops continue, as well as the Contemporary Music Festival. The question arises: is this need also present in the Central and Northern Circuits?

It has been noted that congregations are experiencing a shortage of organists. High School learners who have a sound piano technique need to be encouraged to learn to play the organ – Hermannsburg School offers tuition on various instruments (also used in many congregation worship music groups) and opportunities for learners to experience 2 to 4-part singing in the different choirs, playing in a Brass Band and leading worship songs in the Chapel Band. The Taizé-style services are becoming increasingly popular amongst young and old.

Members of numerous congregations feel the deep divide between so-called traditional music and worship music. We are all members of that one body and are united in Christ (1.Cor.12:12) – we all have our own needs and tastes (even within one congregation); I call upon all of us to get to know different musical styles and new songs/hymns, to tolerate and appreciate our differences – they need not drive us apart, in seeking to PRAISE and SERVE our Lord!

Connie Ortmann

Church Music General