

Music Without Musicians

Psalm 100 encourages us to *Make a joyful noise unto the Lord*. Our small church plant can do that really well! What we can't do . . . not a one of us . . . is play a musical instrument for church worship. One Sunday we sang so badly that the next week we decided to READ the hymns. And we did.

Today our worship services are alive with quality music! Praise be to God!

With the help and guidance of Rev. Dr. Mark Quay (Little Rock Network office) and Rev. Tom Duncan, we were able to get our Recorded Music Program started in only one week. If you are starting a new church, or struggling with your current music program, we understand . . . and are eager to help you.

Let me encourage you to consider a Recorded Music Program. The start up cost is low, the maintenance cost is lower, and the required musical skill is non-existent. Do I have your attention?

There are so many expenses in starting a church. Having a quality, meaningful music ministry does not have to be one of those. Nor does your music ministry have to suffer because you can't afford a talented team of musicians.

We are a small chapel located in the woods of Hot Springs Village, Arkansas. We not close to a city full of talented musicians. In fact, we live in a gated community that non-residents find difficult to enter. We admit to an average age of 65 (like Jack Benny admitted to being 39!) and the first wave of Baby Boomers now occupy some of

our pews. Our Youth Group members are in their 50's. Other than those few characteristics, we are a typical AMiA church plant. (Is there a *typical* anything in AMiA?)

We chose a blend of traditional hymns and praise songs for our worship music. Our congregation sings loud and strong . . . is thrilled by the ability to request a favorite piece of music . . . and is using the "musician money" in the budget for a move into a new place.

Our Music Team's required skill is being able to push the Pause button on the CD player. Our equipment is a loaned CD player with speakers and extra audio wire to place the speakers farther apart. The speakers are placed facing the congregation on either side of the altar area.

Our music resources started with a license to CCLi (\$228 per year) and the strategic purchase of 5 CD albums from Amazon.com (\$75.11). Church members share their favorite CD albums of Christian music and we make periodic single song purchases from Wal-Mart (\$.88 - \$.94 each). Everything is loaded into Microsoft Media Player on a Music Team member's computer.

Today, our database of music exceeds 1,000 hymns and praise songs suitable for congregational singing, instrumental hymns suitable for prayer time, and powerful, soft solos suitable for offertories.

Selecting music that supports the sermon theme, or reflects the church season, or

is suitable for a baptism, a wedding, or a funeral is easy and fun. Changes can be made at the last minute (Saturday night) and a new CD burned for Sunday morning.

We experimented with various ways to provide “the words.” Juggling any combination of a Bible, a hymnal, a prayer book, a worship service bulletin, or a song sheet were systematically ruled out. Just before Christmas we discovered the ease and flexibility of the printed Worship Service with all the music, liturgy, instructions, and announcements printed on 11 x 17 paper folded in half. (of course, we use LARGE print)

The by-products of this type of Music Ministry are still being discovered. They include:

- In recruiting new members, we share a copy of a Sunday Worship Service and a CD with the music from that service.
- Church members received a CD gift of the Christmas Eve music following that service.
- Members in the hospital receive copies of Sunday’s music.
- The congregation has claimed *Ancient Words* as its traditional Gospel Hymn.
- People who enjoy music, but lack musical talent, are able to serve in this ministry.

And you should hear our glorious recording of *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow!* We sing it through twice and everyone who hears us knows how blessed we feel. Once again, music is a major part of our worship services.

Sharan Gunn
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