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DISCOVERING MINISTRY BEST PRACTICES AMONG  
WORSHIP PASTORS OF CANADIAN CHURCHES  
WITH AN ATTENDANCE OF AT  
LEAST SIX HUNDRED

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A Ministry Research Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Educational Ministry

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by  
Lee Julian Brubacher  
December 2023

**APPROVAL SHEET**

DISCOVERING MINISTRY BEST PRACTICES AMONG  
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For the praise of the triune God  
in the gathered church

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## PREFACE

After twenty-five years in worship ministry at three Ontario churches, I knew I needed to grow in my understanding of my role and in its outworking among the musicians, artists, actors, and tech people with whom I serve.

My first commission, at Elgin Missionary Church in Stratford, taught me invaluable lessons as a young worship leader. I am grateful to the staff and musicians at this church for getting me started on the right path.

The next assignment as worship pastor at West Highland Baptist Church in Hamilton lasted twenty-one years! I could fill pages recounting the names of those who influenced and befriended me during these crucial years. For the purposes of this paper, I will specially mention the two lead pastors at West Highland during my tenure there. Thanks to Deric Bartlett and John Mahaffey for your coaching, mentoring, and partnership as we labored together week after week to craft God-honoring and Christ-exalting services of worship. The concerns which led to this project were birthed in the trenches of ministry at West Highland.

Two years into the writing of this project paper, the Lord uprooted my family and directed us to a new church, Emmanuel Baptist Church in Barrie. I am deeply grateful to the staff of Emmanuel who encouraged this project through to completion. I am thankful to lead pastor Josh Davy for your friendship and support.

All along this two-and-a-half-decade experience of worship ministry, Dr. Doug Thomson has been a constant mentor. Thank you, Doug, for all the teaching, coaching, and memories. Special thanks to you Doug, Dr. David Barker, and Pastor Gary Sharpe for your extensive and helpful evaluating of my podcast manuscripts.

I could not possibly have completed this degree and project without the expertise of my supervisor Dr. Matthew Westerholm from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS). Thank you Dr. Westerholm for pushing me to be better, and for the many laughs along the way. I am also grateful to Dr. Matt Haste, Dr. Justin Irving, Torey Teer, Nicholas Campbell, and Jennifer Stec, as well as the entire SBTS Writing Center team for crucial help with doctoral direction and the craft of writing.

Lastly, to my family, and especially to my wife Cheryl, my life-long love and music partner. The many hours you spent driving while I typed next to you in the car has not gone unnoticed. You were and are my chief help mate in life and ministry. I love you.

It is my prayer that worship pastors in Canada and around the world will be encouraged and equipped through this material and that the Body of Christ will be built up.

For the praise of the triune God in the gathered church,

Lee Brubacher

Barrie, Ontario

December 2023

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The lead pastor of a church, often-labeled senior pastor, is the primary under-shepherd of a given congregation. However, due to increasingly high expectations and the growing complexities of the Sunday morning experience, many churches choose to hire a full-time person to oversee musical worship. As perhaps the second most recognized leader in a congregation, the staff worship leader's role comes with significant influence and responsibility.<sup>1</sup> Following the pattern of the apostle Paul who counseled Timothy to “discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Tim 4:5), music pastors<sup>2</sup> must equip and train lay leaders to help carry the load of ministry, as well as to fulfill their own callings.<sup>3</sup> What makes a worship pastor successful in this task? What kind of spiritual heart and commitment are required? What sort of creative solutions have been found in managing and shepherding the musicians and artists the Lord entrusts to a local church?

As a worship pastor in Canada for more than twenty-five years, these questions continue to engage my mind and stir my heart. A wise leader purposefully draws wisdom

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<sup>1</sup> Zac Hicks writes to worship pastors, “Each and every week, you are looked up to as an example and a leader. You have a sphere of immediate influence. Because you stand in front of people and lead them in God’s holy worship, you are given the status of leader.” Zac M. Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 14.

<sup>2</sup> I acknowledge that the title “worship pastor” or “music pastor” may spark theological controversy based on where the reader lands in the complementarian/egalitarian debate. A few of those consulted in this study, either in the surveys or contemporary literature, are women authors or practitioners of worship ministry. Although my conviction is that a complementarian model of church leadership is faithful to the New Testament, and that the title “elder/pastor” should be reserved for biblically qualified men, the point of this research project is not to open nor settle this debate. Rather, the purpose is to gather data from a wide range of worship pastors/directors/staff members in some of Canada’s largest evangelical churches. For the sake of consistency and clarity, I have used the term “worship pastor” almost exclusively in this paper to refer to the person hired full-time in charge of local church musical worship, the arts, and technology.

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations come from the NIV.

from those more advanced in their responsibility and influence. Perhaps new insights can be gained not just from other worship leaders in close proximity to my own church, but also from coast to coast. To this end, I engaged in research with a host of music pastors from across Canada. This project sought to explore best practices in ministry among Canadian evangelical worship pastors of churches larger than six hundred in attendance. In this scenario, the term “best” was not meant to convey “perfect” or “the only.” In general use, “best practices” is understood as “wisdom,” as actions which demonstrate success in fulfilling the goals of an organization.<sup>4</sup>

Worship pastors have a myriad of procedural choices at their disposal. Many of these leaders have significant autonomy in determining which songs to sing, which musicians to schedule, and which tech gear to purchase. Music pastors need to build leadership teams, equip volunteers, support church staff, as well as remain personally healthy in their walk with the Lord. The experiential wisdom of Canadian worship pastors was understood as “best practices,” information to benefit my own leadership as well as others in a similar pastoral role.

### **Context**

The scope of this research was nationwide. Worship pastors from Canada’s larger evangelical churches were surveyed and interviewed to ascertain best practice wisdom regarding worship ministry in their local settings. In some ways, the context of this project was the wider church in Canada. However, the immediate context was West Highland Church, where I served as worship pastor from 2001 to 2023.<sup>5</sup> The ministry of

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<sup>4</sup> Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines best practices as “a procedure that has been shown by research and experience to produce optimal results and that is established or proposed as a standard suitable for widespread adoption.” *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2020), s.v. “best practice,” <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/best%20practice>.

<sup>5</sup> In February of 2023, the Lord called me to a new pastoral ministry at Emmanuel Church, Barrie, Ontario. This project began in the local West Highland context but was implemented in Barrie and across the country.

West Highland provided the direct context and the source of challenges worth tackling. These led to the rationale, the areas of needed improvement to which national best practice ideas were brought to bear.

### **West Highland Church History**

Located on the shores of Lake Ontario and with a population of 550,000, Hamilton is the third largest economy and populated city in the province of Ontario. Our city is made up of a blue- and white-collar workforce with a rich diversity of cultures where nearly one in four people were not born in Canada.<sup>6</sup> Hamilton has a strong manufacturing sector and remains one of North America’s key locations for the production of steel.

On October 1, 1972, a small collection of families founded a new Fellowship Baptist church on the west mountain of Hamilton, aptly calling the congregation West Highland Baptist Church.<sup>7</sup> Just three years later, the church constructed its first building. Two extended pastorates gave stability and fostered numerical growth through the 1980s and 1990s, leading to a second building campaign. By the fall of 2001, when I joined the staff as the worship pastor, the church had reached an average of 700 in attendance on Sunday morning.

Lead Pastor John Mahaffey, who began in 2008, produced a significant document called “Vision 2020” which sought to provide a clear direction for the church over the next twelve years. This vision statement featured two areas that most directly impacted worship ministry. First was the imperative of fostering “inspiring services of worship,” ever aiming to connect our congregation with the Lord—the source of all joy

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<sup>6</sup> Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, “Economic Profile Series: Hamilton, Ontario,” Spring 2020, 1, 4, [https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/weekly\\_acquisitions\\_list-ef/2021/21-08/publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2021/ircc/Ci4-207-2-2020-eng.pdf](https://epe.lac-bac.gc.ca/100/201/301/weekly_acquisitions_list-ef/2021/21-08/publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2021/ircc/Ci4-207-2-2020-eng.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada, the largest Baptist denomination in Canada, with over 500 churches. For a fuller history, see West Highland Church, “History,” accessed June 1, 2021, <https://www.westhighland.org/history>.



and Christian maturity.<sup>8</sup> A second visionary goal identified leadership development as a priority. The document read: “Whereas in the past we called a leader to do the ministry, in the present and the future we will have leaders who are called to produce other leaders.”<sup>9</sup> Although the year 2020 has passed, these two visionary goals impact my planning as well as West Highland Church’s philosophy of ministry.

### **Music Ministry Beginnings**

From the outset, West Highland worship was heavily influenced by the ministry of Bill and Gloria Gaither and by the older song forms of the hymnbook, fostering a stylistically traditional musical appetite in the congregation. Early in its history, the church launched a choir to provide regular special music, thereby augmenting the artistic creativity of Sunday ministry. In May of 1987, during the inaugural Sunday in the new building at 1605 Garth Street, archival footage recorded a traditional, robed choir proceeding to the front in worship. As time passed, the choir shifted to embrace more of a contemporary, worship-leading presence on stage. This change helped the choir morph from its roots of singing *to* the people, to the more up-to-date philosophy of singing *with* the people.

In 1998, the church launched a small orchestra, thereby introducing instruments not usually involved in worship team ministry. The church music ministry grew to include monthly brass, woodwind, and string support. The orchestra continued to support the worship team and added many modern songs to their repertoire. In 2010,

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<sup>8</sup> From the “Vision 2020” Document, Pastor John Mahaffey writes,

I envision our future worship services building on our present strengths in music and incorporating double the numbers of people we presently have in orchestra and choir. The services will be Christ focused and Word filled so that we “read the Bible, preach the Bible, pray the Bible, sing the Bible and see the Bible.” I see the experience of 1 Corinthians 14:24, 25 becoming a regular part of our services as growing numbers of unbelievers, witnessed to by our people, attend the services, hear the Word preached, experience the praise of God’s people, hear the testimonies and witness the baptisms of new believers and are ‘convinced by all’ resulting in them saying “God is really among you.” (John Mahaffey, “Vision 2020,” West Highland Church, 2022, 3)

<sup>9</sup> Mahaffey, “Vision 2020,” 4.

West Highland launched an Academy of Music, offering private music lessons in piano, voice, guitar, strings, brass, woodwinds, and percussion, for people of all ages in the church and in the community. Around the same time, the church grew in its community outreach by moving from the traditional choir cantata to fully orchestrated dramatic musicals, thereby reaching a wider audience.

All these aspects of the church's musical background (Gaithers, hymnbook, choir, orchestra, formal music lessons), created an ethos of strong musicianship and involvement with a stylistically conservative congregational expression. In the wake of such an adroit musical legacy, many young artists became intimidated, felt insignificant in such a large ministry, and were discouraged by lack of passionate engagement amongst church members.

I anticipated that discovering best practices among Canada's worship pastors would offer helpful solutions to the musical challenges we faced at our church. Our calling, reinforced through Vision 2020, included shepherding current and future musicians to understand West Highland culture and also to seek ways to foster evident joy of the Lord among the people.

### **Worship Leadership**

West Highland Church came of age when "song leaders," not pastors, guided the Sunday morning singing. These "song leaders" were typically glorified soloists with an exclusively musical resume. This song leading style was utilized during the church's first three decades. There were no guitarist leaders in the main service. By the late 1990s, the youth ministry had begun to encourage the use of acoustic and electric guitars, drums, and bass guitar in their meetings, however the main services continued to be directed by a hand-conducting soloist, backed by piano and organ.

When my family arrived in 2001, we were welcomed by a warm and friendly church that knew how to worship with heart and voice but whose music style was dated.

The most current songs they knew at that time were the biblically-faithful yet well-worn “Our God Reigns” and “Shout to the Lord.”<sup>10</sup> As the first full-time pastor in charge of worship ministries, it was my challenging joy to implement a full-orbed worship team schedule, with weekly assigned musicians for piano, organ, guitar, bass, drums, and vocalists. I felt this was needed in order to bring us into the twenty-first century and keep our church from fading into musical insignificance. To be sure, there was no desire to ignore the rich musical heritage and hymnody upon which we were founded thirty years prior. It was nevertheless crucial that West Highland advance in its musical literacy to include more modern songs and styles.

I was the first “modern” worship leader to not only engage contemporary band instruments but also to lead from the guitar. The role of the worship leader started to morph from one who *followed* the direction of the piano player, to music director who *set* direction for the entire music team. This required partnership, idea-sharing, and slowly yet purposefully expanding our traditional flavors to include modern instrumentation and tastes. Over the years, this slow progression included other worship leaders, some who led by voice and others who led from piano or guitar.

After twenty years of service at this church, the recruitment and training of leaders for worship ministry continued to be a high priority. Two Pauline mandates for pastors guided us. Paul counseled Timothy to “discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Tim 4:5), and “the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2). These two Scriptures weighed on me and provided a biblical basis for advancing leadership in our worship ministry. These verses also provided some of the rationale for seeking best practice ideas from other pastors in how to faithfully follow the apostle Paul’s

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<sup>10</sup> Leonard E. Smith Jr., “Our God Reigns,” Hymnary.org, accessed October 6, 2023, [https://hymnary.org/text/how\\_lovely\\_on\\_the\\_mountains\\_are\\_the\\_feet](https://hymnary.org/text/how_lovely_on_the_mountains_are_the_feet); Darlene Zschech, “Shout to the Lord,” Hymnary.org, accessed October 6, 2023, [https://hymnary.org/tune/shout\\_to\\_the\\_lord\\_zschech](https://hymnary.org/tune/shout_to_the_lord_zschech).

instructions on leadership.

### **Rationale**

Whereas the requirement of worship leadership in the Old Testament was one of Levitical office (1 Chr 16:4–6; 23:5), prophetic gifting (1 Chr 25:1), *and* musical skill (1 Chr 15:22),<sup>11</sup> churches today hire worship staff based on a variety of skill sets. Some leaders are gifted musicians; others are brilliant with tech. Some music pastors are skilled instrumentalists; others are vocalists. Some music pastors excel in up-front worship leading; others excel in behind-the-scenes planning and organizing. Some are doers; others are delegators. Some use the arts evangelistically; others use the arts for discipleship. Whatever the case, churches are desperate for quality leaders to help organize their volunteer artists and lead their services.

Although I was grateful for the excellent theological and practical ministry education I received at three institutions of higher learning, a great many of my leadership skills were developed “on the job” during twenty-five years as a pastor of worship. Much of my ministry knowledge came from experience, not from the classroom. This hands-on pedagogy enriched me but also introduced a limiting factor, namely, *routine*. The weekly routine of producing service orders, rehearsals, and services limits one’s ability to think creatively and plan with vision. This incessant schedule tended to produce two negative side-effects in the ministry. First, the “tyranny of the urgent” demanded that decisions be made out of expediency, not necessarily out of telos. I often did not have time to investigate what other churches were doing in musical ministry, but felt shackled by the needs of “now” shouting for my attention. Second, related to the first, a negative side-effect of the weekly grind of ministry developed a

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<sup>11</sup> According to Donald Hustad, in describing worship of the ancient Hebrews, “Music was professional—the work of talented, trained, and ‘ordained’ (by virtue of their birth) directors, singers, and instrumentalists of the priestly Levitical tribe.” Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1993), 76.

myopism in me. I did what I did because I always did it. Rather than drawing from the experiential wealth of other congregations, my focus stayed within the walls of my own church.

In light of this backdrop, the need to gather national best practices became clear. This project sought to assemble the collective ministry wisdom of a selection of worship pastors from Canada's largest churches, to analyze and synthesize the data, and then disseminate these best practice ideas back out to these same leaders—the very ones who, like myself, struggled with the weekly routine. The results of this study were not only to be shared publicly, but also used to benefit my role, and by extension, the ministry of West Highland Church and any other future church I would serve in.

Three challenges at our church were identified to benefit from the shared wisdom of other worship pastors. These challenges provide a direct rationale for the project, three local questions to which national answers could be brought to bear.

### **Challenge 1: Lack in Leader Diversity**

At the time of writing, there were five musicians, including my wife and myself, who *could* lead worship, although only three were regularly active. Our church could benefit from more diverse worship leadership than currently existed with my family at the musical helm of most Sundays.

The Old Testament modeled a diversifying of leadership in the life of David. Even though he was a skilled musician, privileged with a national platform, King David did not restrict worship leadership to himself. He diversified his own musical effectiveness by assigning four thousand musicians (1 Chr 23:5; 25:1–8) and also four thousand gatekeepers (1 Chr 23:5; 26:1–19; 2 Chr 23:19), who were themselves musicians.<sup>12</sup> It must be acknowledged that a modern worship pastor cannot equate

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himself directly with the ancient musician David, who was also king in Israel. Today's church worship staff do not hold the authoritarian power of a king. Nevertheless, we see that David knew the importance of sharing leadership with others. Consequently, he assigned thousands of other musicians to each take their place. The vision of a diversity of worship leadership was seen as a need not only in West Highland but also in other churches across Canada.

West Highland also struggled with ethnic diversity in its worship leadership. John the Revelator portrays beautiful diversity before the throne of God (Rev 5:5–14; 7:9–17; 19:1–10), where people of all ages and cultures are represented. This multi-colored tapestry was evident in our city and in our church but was not represented in our musical leadership. All current leaders were Caucasian. If every West Highland worship leader looked, planned, and thought like me, our church would perpetuate a homogenous flavor.<sup>13</sup> Our church desired both cultural and generational diversity. West Highland should experience the benefit of corporate song leadership by people of various ages and cultures. Perhaps other Canadian churches with a lack of ethnic diversity in their musical leadership have found ways of welcoming the nations into positions of influence. West Highland needed to learn from the ideas of others to meet this challenge in our own setting.

## **Challenge 2: Lack in Creative Growth**

Two of West Highland's current leaders of corporate praise were interested in learning and teaching new songs while the other three had less appetite for this kind of

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Leithart writes, "Levitical guards [gatekeepers] now 'do guard duty' by singing and playing musical instruments." Peter J. Leithart, *From Silence to Song: The Davidic Liturgical Revolution*, (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), chap. 4, sec. "Standing to Serve," Kindle.

<sup>13</sup> Author Sandra Maria Van Opstal writes, "The biggest barrier Christians face in developing communities hospitable to people of every ethnicity and culture is their ignorance about their own culture." This becomes "the curse of the white suburban worship leader." Sandra Maria Van Opstal, *The Next Worship: Glorifying God in a Diverse World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 40.

creativity. By “creativity” I did not refer to needless and purposeless artistic expression. Creativity as an end goal is not biblical. The goal of creation itself is not to declare its own praise but that of its Maker. The Psalmist wrote of the glory of creation pointing to God: “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Ps 19:1). All of our corporate expression ought to reflect the Lord. Creativity then, needed to be understood as progression—forever seeking new ways to glorify the Lord in new contexts. During the old covenant, God’s people continually found ways to express creative praise to the Lord, especially in recounting his mighty acts during the exodus. In every generation, singers sang, dancers danced, and instrumentalists played in honor of Yahweh’s power salvation. In the New Testament era, we focus our joyful thanksgiving in two directions: back at the cross as the foundation for our faith and forward to the new creation as the hope of our faith. Even though the cross has passed, and the new creation will surely come to pass, God has not stopped working in the here and now. He continues to create. Spring showcases the Lord’s artistic flair of awakening the world to life after months of cold slumber. A newborn baby’s cry resounds with the Creator’s song. Angels rejoice as a sinner repents and is made new by the Spirit’s power. Divine creation continues.

This motivates creative ministry for the Lord. One of the ways worship leaders invest in creative growth is in introducing their church to new songs of faith. Our challenge at West Highland was that some music leaders were content with songs of yesteryear and did not seem to grow as students of new worship music. Psalm 33 encourages God’s people to “sing to him a new song” based on his ever-new actions on our behalf.<sup>14</sup> Singing a “new song” is not as much a call for novelty on the part of the

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<sup>14</sup> Daniel Block explains, “The concern here is neither creativity nor novelty; the idioms and phrasing are entirely conventional and traditional, as is the expression ‘new song’ itself. This song is new because it celebrates the singer’s deliverance from bondage (cf. Ps. 40:1–3[2–4]), the appearance of Israel’s King (Ps. 149:1–9), and the triumph of YHWH over the enemy (Ps. 98:1–3; Isa. 42:10).” Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 235.

worship planner but a call for testimonial worship on the part of the people. A leader's role is to give new expression to each new generation of believers but also to retain quality forms and songs of the past. This methodology provides continuity with those who have come before. "New song" creativity needed to be part of West Highland Church's liturgical ethos: leaders who were learning, growing, and willing to shepherd West Highland into the future. We lacked this kind of ever-progressing, creative leadership and would be served by the infusion of other churches' best practice ideas for creative growth.

### **Challenge 3: Lack in My Ministry Oversight Ability**

After more than twenty years as music pastor, I recognized that the responsibility of worship in our church rested primarily on my shoulders. Human nature wants to blame past directors for today's weaknesses. After two decades it would be foolish to blame existing challenges on musicians who served before my tenure at the church. Rather, it was my responsibility to seek the Spirit's power in leading into the future. There were two aspects of my oversight of worship ministries which needed to be addressed.

The first challenge I faced was in leadership multiplication. Paul's advice to Timothy, "entrust [gospel teaching] to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim 2:2), and "discharge all the duties of your ministry" (2 Tim 4:5), continued to burden my heart. Passing on the truth of the gospel to others is not just the role of lead pastors, church planters, and missionaries. This aspect of leadership multiplication had direct application to my calling as a worship pastor, intent on pursuing gospel-centered ministry. After many years serving between two churches, I was regularly confronted with my lack of skill in entrusting ministry to others. It was all too easy for me to do the work rather than training and equipping others to share in it. Gathering and sharing best practice ideas from other music leaders would benefit my own leadership, our local



ministry at West Highland, as well as other churches across Canada.

The role of “visionary motivator” was a second aspect of leadership that challenged me. King David was masterful in his organization and motivation of the people. David exercised considerable directive leadership into forming Levitical worship for the tent and future temple. He directed the chiefs of the Levites to appoint various roles including temple craftsmen (1 Chr 22:15–16), construction supervisors (1 Chr 23:4), officials and judges (1 Chr 23:4), gatekeepers (1 Chr 23:5), and musicians (1 Chr 23:5). Donald Hustad conjectured, “Evidently there was no divine command or permission involved, just David’s creative initiative.”<sup>15</sup> Courageous creativity is needed by Canadian worship pastors. This research project aims to discover and share helpful ideas, benefiting myself and other music pastors across the country.

By inference from David’s life as national music leader, the role of a modern worship pastor demands a high level of motivational and visionary skill. These areas did not come naturally to me. God granted me a steady personality, with high functioning energy. Week after week, month after month, year after year, I worked hard following the needs of the “tyranny of the urgent.” In many ways, this got the job of planning and leading done. However, another part of the job—casting biblical vision before the musicians, artists, and tech volunteers, motivating them to serve with goal-oriented joy was sorely lacking in me. These were areas that I needed to evaluate and address in my own leadership calling. These were areas needing improvement by utilizing some best practice ideas from other churches.

Discussing ministry with other worship pastors immediately uncovered many similar joys and sorrows. I was confident that I was not alone in experiencing the above three challenges of a lack of leader diversity, a lack of creative growth, and a lack of personal ability in the area of worship ministry oversight. Churches in Canada could

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<sup>15</sup> Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 134.

benefit from the shared wisdom of their worship pastors. My own leadership capabilities would likewise be strengthened by the infusion of collective insight. As best practice information was gathered in the areas of theology, discipleship, artistry, and leadership, and then disseminated to West Highland and other churches across the country, the kingdom of Christ was strengthened.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this research project was to discover ministry best practices among worship pastors of Canadian churches with an attendance of at least six hundred, as it pertained to four categories: theologian, disciple, artist, and leader.<sup>16</sup>

This mixed methods study addressed a group of at least thirty worship pastors across Canada. An explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used in which quantitative data were collected and analyzed, followed by qualitative open-ended questions. In this study, a mixed methods survey was used to gather empirical data regarding the *who*, *what*, and *when* of ministry. Finally, a series of follow-up interview questions ascertained the *how* of ministry. The goal of this research was to provide a sharing of wisdom with my own church as well as those who served as staff practitioners of worship in other churches.

### **Goals**

There were four goals attached to the main purpose of discovering ministry best practices among worship pastors of Canadian churches. These measurable goals were evaluated at the end of the project.

1. The first goal was to identify worship pastors from at least forty congregations in Canada with an attendance of at least six hundred.
2. The second goal was to develop a mixed-methods survey and interview protocol to

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<sup>16</sup> These categories taken from Kevin J. Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 14.

discover best practices among church worship staff.

3. The third goal was to implement the survey and interview protocol with a random sample of at least thirty worship pastors that met the criteria.
4. The fourth goal was to develop a series of six podcast manuscripts encompassing proven wisdom garnered from the survey in key areas of theology, discipleship, artistry, and leadership.

All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project. This methodology is described in the following section and culminated in a final evaluation of the project based on the stated goals.

### **Research Methodology**

Successful completion of this project depended upon the completion of these four goals. The first goal was to identify worship pastors from at least forty congregations in Canada with an attendance of at least six hundred in normal attendance. This attendance number was chosen for three reasons. First, most churches of this size would have a staff member hired to oversee worship ministry. Second, West Highland Church, where I served for twenty-one years, although larger, remained close in scope to churches of this size. Third, I chose the threshold attendance of six hundred to keep the survey population manageable. Canada was not flush with megachurches. In researching evangelical denominations across the country, I was able to develop a list of churches over six hundred in regular attendance. This list was larger than the thirty churches I required.

This goal was to be considered successful met when, firstly, a list of qualifying “free church” Canadian congregations was developed. These churches were sought from evangelical denominations such as Baptist, Missionary, Pentecostal, Great Commission Collective, and other groups with similar ministry style. In order for best practices to be meaningful, it was important that churches be found with relatable music and tech style.

Liturgical churches meeting in Gothic cathedrals, who followed a high Anglican liturgy from Cranmer's *Book of Common Prayer*, accompanied with pipe organ, would have little in common with modern free churches who followed no set liturgy and embraced a Hillsong-like praise band with use of projected lyrics and moving lights. This is why the survey population was to be chosen from "low churches." This goal was to be considered successful met when, secondly, worship pastors from these forty churches were identified.

The second goal was to develop a mixed-methods survey and interview protocol to discover ministry best practices among church worship staff. The intention was not to read "best" with letter-of-the-law lenses. Rather, using the spirit of the law principle, we could understand "best practices" to mean the wisdom of experience. These are the policies and procedures used by Canada's worship pastors which have proven useful and helpful in their contexts. This survey not only gathered statistical demographic data but also information on the four key areas as outlined by author Kevin Navarro: theologian, disciple, artist, leader.<sup>17</sup> The survey was "test driven" by a designated expert (a fellow worship pastor), who provided feedback in terms of readability, clarity, and depth. This goal was to be considered successfully met when the survey was edited and polished according to the expert feedback.

The third goal was to implement the survey and interview with a random sample of at least thirty worship pastors from other larger churches to ascertain their wisdom on personal growth as well as a myriad of practical ministry tasks. This goal was to be considered successfully met when thirty worship pastors completed the mixed-methods survey and of these thirty people, eight agreed to move on to complete follow-

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<sup>17</sup> Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader*, 14.

up interviews.<sup>18</sup>

The fourth goal was to develop a series of six podcast manuscripts encompassing best practice wisdom garnered from the survey using author Kevin Navarro's character traits of theologian, disciple, artist, and leader.<sup>19</sup> The aim of this research project was not simply to benefit worship leaders at my former and current local church, nor simply to increase my own leadership capacity. Rather, the plan was to present the findings back to those who filled out the survey as a benefit to their churches across Canada. Furthermore, the podcast series would be offered online for any other worship leader, director, or pastor interested in gaining insight and wisdom from the research.

To ensure logical flow of thought and pedagogical depth, the podcast series manuscripts were evaluated according to a rubric by a panel of three experts (a theologian, a Bible College professor of worship, and a seasoned worship pastor). The work of the panel of experts encompassed step two of the measurement of this goal. This goal was to be considered successful met when the podcast materials were outlined, assembled, written, and expertly evaluated such that 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceed the sufficiency level.

### **Definitions and Delimitations**

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

*Service.* A service referred to a “whole worship event that transpires at a given

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<sup>18</sup> The number of people invited to participate in the survey and interview was chosen purposefully. A survey sample of thirty pastors is large enough to provide a respectable cross-section of opinion, and yet small enough to be manageable. I contacted at least forty churches in the hopes that thirty of these churches would participate in the study. Finally, the list of interviewees needed to be a small sample of the larger group and was capped at eight people. Qualitative questions could result in lengthy video interviews and required significant analysis and post-interview editing.

<sup>19</sup> The intent of assigning six podcasts was to incorporate one session for each of Navarro's four themes (theology, discipleship, artistry, and leadership) as well as an introductory podcast and final/summary session.

time and place by a worshipping community—hence, a worship service.”<sup>20</sup>

*Corporate worship.* Corporate worship occurred when “with attention to Scripture, in openness to the Spirit of God and in covenant community, disciples gather in the name of Jesus to meet God and to seek His Kingdom.”<sup>21</sup>

*Worship pastor.* The title of worship pastor in this project was chosen as one of the most common titles used to represent the paid staff member in charge of music, worship, the arts, and tech ministry in a local church. The Canadian church regularly uses this terminology to delineate the person whose vocational ministry involves coordinating the volunteer musicians, artists, actors, and tech people in the church. This staff member, depending on the local church context, may be given a title such as: *worship leader*, *worship planner*, *lead worshipper*, *music pastor*, *music director*, *music minister*, or, very often, *worship pastor*. Although each of these titles is slightly nuanced, these roles can be understood interchangeably in many churches.<sup>22</sup> Acknowledging that the New Testament restricts the role of “pastor” to qualified men, it was not the scope of this project to delve into a discussion of complementarian versus egalitarian ecclesiology. This project concerned the role of the worship staff member but not the gender of the person in the role.

*Worship.* One delimitation applied to this project. The word *worship* is a nebulous term in that it can be used to describe a Sunday service, a team of musicians who lead songs for the church, an act of ascribing worth to the Lord, and an all-of-life

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<sup>20</sup> Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 51.

<sup>21</sup> Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Spirituality and Theology of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 256.

<sup>22</sup> Bob Kauflin explains,

Worship leaders are one part of a long line of musical leadership in the church. Cantors, choral directors, accompanists, soloists, music directors, song leaders, conductors, and organists have all played a part. . . . So I’ve started using different names for the person who leads the singing, depending on the situation. Music minister. Worship pastor. Service leader. Corporate worship leader. Or one of my favorites, the Music Guy. (Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* [Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008], 51, 54)

attitude of humble submission to Christ.<sup>23</sup> For the purpose of this project, *worship* was understood as the actions of a gathered church in bringing praise to God. These “actions” included, but were not limited to, singing, the public reading of Scripture, corporate prayer, preaching, the giving of offerings, and the celebration of baptism and the Lord’s Table.<sup>24</sup> These worship service elements are the very things worship pastors directly facilitate within the planning process.

### **Conclusion**

At the time of writing, the demands of church music ministry and the needs of expanded worship leadership continued. After twenty-five years of ministry these realities continued to be a burden on my mind and a delight on my heart. This project aimed to leverage the wisdom of other worship pastors in strengthening my own leadership as I oversaw the worship division of our church. As I shared the best practice information locally and among Canadian churches from coast to coast, the church would undoubtedly be built-up. Effectively equipping musicians, tech people, actors, and other artists in leading the gathered church to express praise to the Lord was worth every effort of personal and pastoral growth.

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<sup>23</sup> Carson summarizes, “It [Worship] is for all the people of God at all times and places, and it is bound up with how they live (e.g., Rom 12:1–2).” D. A. Carson, “Worship under the Word,” in *Worship by the Book*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 24.

<sup>24</sup> Acts 2:42 helps churches understand the major components of corporate worship: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

## CHAPTER 2

### BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THE ROLE OF WORSHIP PASTOR

Some contemporary church musicians may wonder if the role of modern worship pastor has any biblical basis. After all, the Bible does not speak of guitars, projectors, digital mixers, or ProPresenter. Paul’s list of church and ministry officers (1 Cor 12:28; Phil 1:1) does not include the title of “worship leader.” However, the Scriptures give clear evidence of what a modern worship pastor ought to be and do. An examination of 1 Chronicles 15–16, Acts 2, Colossians 3, and 2 Timothy 2 provide biblical and theological guidance for the role of worship pastor. Without following these Scriptures, ministry best practice ideas could be founded on shaky theological foundations. However, the biblical writers give solid instruction to modern church worship staff members—that what they believe and how they lead matter. Despite the creative freedom that naturally comes with the role of music pastor, the Bible provides boundaries for this freedom that keep Christian worship Christian. Worship ministry at West Highland Church, and at other churches across Canada, must heed God’s timeless wisdom, *his* best practices.

#### **First Chronicles 15–16**

First Chronicles 15–16 provides modern worship pastors with a rationale for organizing people and processes for the effective worship of the Lord. These chapters recount the story of King David bringing the ark of the covenant from the house of Obed-Edom to its new location in a special tent in the city of Jerusalem. In this passage, we see several aspects of David’s character and leadership in facilitating not only a one-time



worship event but the perpetual nature of corporate worship before the presence of God, symbolized in the ark. Although we cannot automatically bring forward David's best practices for use in the New Testament church, the following aspects of David's leadership from 1 Chronicles 15–16 guide today's music pastors in their own modern-day Levitical roles.

### **David Led People toward God's Word**

In 1 Chronicles 15:2 and 16:40, we read of David's commitment to follow the commands of the Lord. He leads the nation according to his personal respect for God's Word. David knows his Bible.<sup>1</sup> Daniel Block confirms,

When David claims that YHWH's judgments are before him and that he has not strayed from his ordinances, he confesses that he has been reading the Torah as Deuteronomy 17:14–20 instructs kings to do. . . . The fact that David organized temple worship according to all that was written in the "Torah of YHWH" (1 Chr 16:40) shows he treated it as authoritative Scripture.<sup>2</sup>

David Peterson explains that David's determination to bring the ark to Zion forms a continuity with Sinai: "The Exodus traditions were thus attached to the city of David and the rule of God was to be expressed through the temple and the Davidic kingship."<sup>3</sup> The "rule of God," God's Word, directed David's steps.

In 1 Chronicles 15:2, David confirmed the law that only the Levites may carry the ark of God. David was surely still stinging from God's judgment in chapter 13 at the place labeled *Perez Uzzah* ("outbreak against Uzzah"). Uzzah had disobeyed the Lord's instruction for only the Levitical clan of the Kohathites to carry the ark. Further, "they

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<sup>1</sup> We see a knowledge of God and his laws in David's song writing. Many of the attributes and names of God are in full display: Creator (Ps 8:3), Redeemer (Ps 30:3; 34:22), Owner (Ps 24:1), Merciful (Ps 25:6; 31:9), Savior (Ps 27:1), Shepherd (Ps 23:1), Forgiver (Ps 32:1), Helper (Ps 33:20), Deliverer (Ps 34:4, 17), Love (Ps 33:5; 36:10), Righteous (Ps 36:6), one who hears prayer (Ps 28:2, 6), deserving of worship (Ps 33:1), and the Holy One (Ps 22:3; 24:3; 30:4).

<sup>2</sup> Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 177.

<sup>3</sup> David G. Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 49.

must not touch the holy things or they will die” (Num 4:15). Uzzah paid for this mistake with his life. As David prepared to move the ark again, he made sure the Levites followed God’s commands regarding its transportation, so that they “do not make the same mistake a second time.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly today, leaders must direct their followers’ attention *toward* God’s Word and not *away from* it as Uzzah had done.

J. A. Thompson claims that the ark was no longer a holy icon by the time of the Chronicler. Thompson writes that “the original readers of this book had no more opportunity to worship God before the ark than we do.”<sup>5</sup> Andrew Hill clarifies that by the time Chronicles was written, the “sacred chest was lost or destroyed during the Exile.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, claims Thompson, the reality of God residing in the ark had lost its import. Perhaps the Chronicler was reminding his readers that although the ark had ceased to exist, the Word of God had not. Thompson rightly states that the ark represented both God’s presence and his holiness.<sup>7</sup>

David knew these realities. This is why he led the nation in following the Law. Michael Wilcock adds, “To David, the ark for all its antiquity is a central feature of his people’s religion, and so he goes back to the maker’s instructions to find out about its proper handling.”<sup>8</sup> Today’s worship pastors have a similar calling—not to lead Christians in obeying the Torah, but certainly in drawing people back to the Book. Music ministry is not just about music. Regardless of the tools we use or the skills we bring, serving the Lord requires a standard of personal righteousness, of abiding by God’s commands. Just

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<sup>4</sup> Peter J. Leithart, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2019), 52.

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, New American Commentary 9 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 134.

<sup>6</sup> Andrew E. Hill, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 21.

<sup>7</sup> Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, 134–35.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Wilcock, *The Message of Chronicles: One Church, One Faith, One Lord*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 69.

as David ensured national law keeping within these worship-framed chapters, today's worship pastors also have the responsibility of guiding their worshipping communities to model biblical living.

### **David Organized People According to Worship Duties**

As a king, David could do what he wanted and ask his subjects to do his bidding. His commands were obeyed on penalty of death. In this regard, it is incongruous to directly equate David's leadership empowerment with that of a modern leader. Roddy Braun picks up on this: "It is of course true that many have difficulty in seeing the relevance for today of the temple, and especially the elaborate Levitical organization detailed here." Braun goes on to provide support for connecting both Testaments in this area of corporate worship: "The charge to give thanks to the Lord and to sing to his name (16:8–9) still rings out among his people. And his people still say 'Amen' and praise the Lord (16:36)."<sup>9</sup> In spite of the cultural differences, we see in David the kind of administrative delegation needed by modern worship pastors.

In 1 Chronicles 15–16, we read of David's edicts assigning certain Levitical families to worship-related tasks. The Kohathite clan carried the ark (Num 4:15; 1 Chr 15:2). The families of Heman, Asaph, and Ethan served as musician gatekeepers (1 Chr 15:17–18). The head Levite, Kenaniah, was "in charge of the singing . . . because he was skillful at it" (1 Chr 15:22). Kenaniah was not chosen by default because of his family ranking. His family ranking was chosen because of his skill. David confirmed Kenaniah's calling by making him the choir director. A group of brass players was selected to "blow trumpets before the ark of God" (15:24). Some Levites were gatekeepers (15:17–18; 16:38). Others were appointed as musicians before the ark (16:4–6, 37). Zadok the priest

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<sup>9</sup> Roddy Braun, *1 Chronicles*, Word Biblical Commentary 14 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986), 194.

and his fellow priests were to offer sacrifices at Gibeon (16:39–40).

We see that David skillfully organized the people of his day for worship duties. In this area, David is a model for modern worship pastors who are charged with doing the same. Whether in ancient or modern times, those involved in leading music and worship serve in diverse ways. In our day there are instrumentalists, singers, directors, Scripture readers, sound people, projection personnel, actors, dancers, administrators, and a host of others. In the era of Israel’s kings, the Levites themselves supported all the requirements of corporate worship. The Chronicler records David appointing “some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to extol, thank, and praise the LORD” (1 Chr 16:4).<sup>10</sup> In this verse we see even more diversity in the appointments of David. The Levites were to extol (*zākar*—“to cause to remember, recall, call to mind”),<sup>11</sup> thank (*yādā*—“praise, confess thanks”),<sup>12</sup> and praise (*hālal*—“to boast, to shine forth, celebrate”) the Lord.<sup>13</sup> Edward Curtis and Albert Madsen write, “These indicate three forms of service, the first a liturgical prayer at the presentation of that part of the meal-offering which was burnt, the second refers to the use of the Psalms that prominently confess and give thanks to God, and the third to praises like those of the Hallelujah songs.”<sup>14</sup> David was a skilled administrator in assigning duties. So too twenty-first century worship pastors must also be.

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<sup>10</sup> Commentator William Johnstone calls the earlier parallel verse (15:16) a “paragraph by itself,” an introduction to the “identification of the musicians, the work they have to perform and the message they have to proclaim.” William Johnstone, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, vol. 1, *1 Chronicles 1–2 Chronicles 9: Israel’s Place among the Nations* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 183.

<sup>11</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 269.

<sup>12</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 392.

<sup>13</sup> Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 237.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Lewis Curtis and Albert Alonzo Madsen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Chronicles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1976), 220.

## David Led Worship

Another Old Testament rationale for the modern worship pastor is found in David's role in leading worship. In a sense, the moving of the ark included a corporate worship service. This event was marked by a national celebration with music (1 Chr 15:27–8), dancing (15:29), sacrifices (15:26), liturgical costuming (15:27), and food (16:3).<sup>15</sup> David was responsible for the entire affair. Just like modern musicians sometimes lead corporate praise with voice while others provide instrumental accompaniment, it seems David was this kind of leader in this story. Nowhere does it say David picked up the harp of his youth and played along. However, he prepared the setting (15:1), communicated the plan to other leaders (15:3–16), called for holiness (15:12), aligned the event with God's law/Word (15:13), assigned liturgical roles (15:16), led the procession (15:25), rejoiced with the people (15:25), wore ministerial clothing (15:27), danced (15:29), led the sacrifices (16:2), prayed over the people (16:2), distributed ritual food (16:3), delegated ongoing ministry to others (16:4, 37–42), commissioned Asaph to compose an original song (16:7), sang the history of God's faithfulness to Israel (16:8–36), and, finally, took time to bless his family (16:43). This list of responsibilities, which were embraced by David so long ago, makes close application to worship staff members in today's churches. Many of these Davidic tasks or liturgical actions equate to the various ways music pastors are called to lead God's people in 2022.

## David Held a Priest-Like Role

As Israel's appointed national and spiritual leader, David occasionally operates in priestly ways. He sometimes dons Levitical attire: "The linen ephod mentioned in 1 Chr 15:27 was probably understood by the Chronicler as a priestly garment."<sup>16</sup> David

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<sup>15</sup> Hill contends the food listed in 1 Chronicles 16:3 is actually a "ritual meal" and is "part of a covenant-renewal ceremony in the biblical world" (cf. Exod 24:11). Hill, *1 and 2 Chronicles*, 23–24.

<sup>16</sup> William Riley, *King and Cultus in Chronicles: Worship and the Reinterpretation of History*, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 160 (Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1993), 59.

offers sacrifices (2 Sam 6:13). James Hamilton admits that “the narratives dealing with David include a number of interesting overtones.”<sup>17</sup> Hamilton relates that the most interesting priest-like aspect of David is his anointing, because “the only people to be anointed in the Pentateuch were the priests. The anointing of the king (Judg 9:8; 1 Sam 9:16; 16:1–3), therefore, smears the king with oil that calls priests to mind.”<sup>18</sup> Modern pastors do not offer physical sacrifices today because Christ has been sacrificed once for all (Heb 7:27). However, worship pastors facilitate the gathered church in offering sacrifices of praise to God (Heb 13:15).

As a psalmist, David writes, “The LORD says to my lord (or Lord), . . . You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (Ps 110:1, 4). David does not speak of himself as the object, and therefore not as a priest. We must read this psalm messianically. Here, David peers forward through the mists of time and prophecies of the coming Messiah who would be a “priest forever.” Although some of his duties appeared priest-like, David was never called a priest. Rather, writes Hamilton, “The prophecies and the patterns work together to prefigure the one [Christ] who would fulfill what Joshua the high priest portended (Zech 3:8), one who would indeed ‘build the temple of Yahweh’ and be ‘priest on his throne’ (6:13).”<sup>19</sup> David’s priest-like role, similar to that of a modern pastor, must not be overstated but rather understood as simply pointing people to our Great High Priest (Heb 4:14).

The apostle John writes that Jesus has made *all* Christians a “kingdom and priests” (Rev 1:6; 5:10). However, as “priests,” believers do not offer Old Testament sacrificial blood to God any longer as this role is fulfilled in Christ. In general, just like the Levites of long ago, Christians serve the purposes of God. More specifically, the

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<sup>17</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., *Typology: Understanding the Bible’s Promise-Shaped Patterns* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2022), 90.

<sup>18</sup> Hamilton, *Typology*, 90.

<sup>19</sup> Hamilton, *Typology*, 91.

leaders of the church of Christ (elders and pastors) have another connection to their Old Testament counterparts. The New Testament outlines the unique priest-like role of elder/pastor in preaching/teaching (compare Jer 18:18 with 1 Tim 3:2; 5:17), guarding doctrine (compare Num 1:53 with 2 Tim 1:14), prayer (compare 2 Chr 30:27 with Acts 6:4), taking care of God’s church (compare 2 Chr 30:17–20 with 1 Tim 3:5; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet 5:2), and organizing leadership (compare Num 1:3 and 1 Chr 15:16–24 with Acts 15:22). Worship pastors, too, perform priest-like duties in facilitating the gathered church to offer musical sacrifices of praise to God (compare 1 Chr 16:41 with Heb 13:15).

We see in King David several components of character and leadership that can be interpreted and utilized by today’s worship pastors. Those who hold a pastoral role in worship and music should, like David, lead people to the Word of God, organize volunteer artists for worship duties, lead corporate praise gatherings, and fulfill a priest-like office. First Chronicles 15–16, then, provides an Old Testament theological underpinning for the role of worship pastor.

### **Acts 2:42**

In 1 Chronicles, the story of David moving the ark to its tent/shrine at Jerusalem showcases him as not only national king but national worship leader, fulfilling similar roles to that of modern music pastors. In the book of Acts, Luke provides a different piece to the biblical worship pastor puzzle. The commitment of the early church in Acts 2:42 to “the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer,” demands equal devotion today. It seems that this list is not exhaustive of all the elements that were included in church gatherings led by the apostles. Acts 2:42 does not include singing, giving the tithe, holy kiss, church discipline, or the assigning of deacons. Some of these aspects of ecclesial life would be introduced by the apostles in various other churches. Components of corporate worship other than the top four listed in Acts 2:42 can be inferred as part of gospel ministry in our twenty-first century context.

The first verb of Acts 2:42, “devoted,” must not be overlooked. Not only is its intent (commitment, loyalty) important in this context, the Greek tense is equally important. The word “devoted,” rendered as past tense in the NIV, is written in the present tense and includes an assumption of future tense. The Greek term here, *proskartereō*, refers to continual, ongoing action, and teaches that the early church *continually devoted* itself to these aspects of corporate worship.<sup>20</sup> Although not seen as easily in the NIV, *proskartereō* forms a textual parallel with Acts 2:46 where the same Greek word is rendered in English “continued to meet.” It is fitting that worship pastors continually foster a devotion to the four worship elements of Acts 2:42 in their churches. Devotion to this quad-practice is not restricted to the early church but should endure among today’s churches. The following provides a study of these four worship components in Acts 2:42, plus a rationale for why worship ministry fits “between the lines.”

### **The Apostles’ Teaching**

What was the nature of the apostles’ teaching listed in Acts 2? Was it sourced from the Old Testament? Was it based on Jesus’s sermons from his three years of ministry? Was the teaching political and/or cultural—tackling important issues such as church planting, persecution, leadership development, and the influences of pagan Roman and Hellenistic thought in Christianity’s infancy? The Greek word used in Acts 2:42 (*didachē*) means “teaching” or “doctrine”<sup>21</sup> and is found thirty times in the New

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<sup>20</sup> Harold K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 350.

<sup>21</sup> Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 98.



Testament.<sup>22</sup>

New Testament scholars understand the apostles' teaching as often related to the reading of the Torah and the Prophets, a carry-over from synagogue worship. Richard Longenecker acknowledges the possibility that the early church might have been seen by some as a sect of Judaism—albeit Second Temple Judaism.<sup>23</sup> However, Eckhard Schnabel writes that the actual content of the apostles' teaching “focused on Jesus’s life, ministry, death, and resurrection, and on his significance in God’s plan.”<sup>24</sup> This is similar to the approach Jesus used on the road to Emmaus. He logically and purposefully used the sweep of the Torah and prophetic writings to teach two of the disciples about himself (Luke 24:27). Darrell Bock also grounds *didachē* in Jesus: “It [the teaching] likely would have included all kinds of instruction . . . ethical and practical teaching and a grounding in the central promise God had given in Jesus.”<sup>25</sup> Ajith Fernando writes, “Considering that Jesus spent so much time teaching the crowds and his inner band of followers, it is not surprising that teaching had an important place in the early church.”<sup>26</sup> The apostles’ teaching in Acts 2:42, then, seems to have been the teachings of Jesus, the gospel story itself.

Some of Jesus’s last words of instruction commissioned the disciples to teach

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<sup>22</sup> The Greek word *didachē* means “teaching” or “training.” However, *Didachē* refers to a “church manual from the late first or early second century AD providing information about early church practice regarding the administration of baptism, the Lord’s Supper, etc.” Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: B&H Books, 2016), 1058. Since the Greek word *didachē* also appears earlier in the Gospels to refer to Jesus’s teaching, it is not likely that the apostles were actually using the formalized collection called the *Didachē* in Acts 2 but rather the eye-witness accounts of the Gospel writers.

<sup>23</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *Acts*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 10, *Luke–Acts*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins, 2009), 926.

<sup>24</sup> Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 178.

<sup>25</sup> Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 150.

<sup>26</sup> Ajith Fernando, *Acts*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 120.

new believers to obey all his commands (Matt 28:20). The Greek word used in this verse (*didaskō*) is a close relation of *didachē* in Acts 2. It is no wonder that biblical scholars confidently link the teaching of Jesus with the apostles' teaching. Commentator J. Bradley Chance summarizes, "[The apostles' teaching] would have included scriptural (Old Testament) interpretation and gospel proclamation."<sup>27</sup> Pastors, ancient and modern, must foster a commitment to the teaching of the apostles, which includes the Old Testament and Jesus's own words. In Acts 2, the church was devoted to this teaching. Although not necessarily given the function of preacher, today's worship pastors must equally devote themselves to God's written Word and to utilizing it in ministry.

### **The Fellowship**

Bradley Chance defines the quad-list in Acts 2:42, as "an ideal portrait of early Christian life."<sup>28</sup> Item number two in the list is "the fellowship" (*koinōnia*).<sup>29</sup> A quick reading of the text might cause someone to equate "the fellowship" with "fellowship," thereby assuming believers should participate in greeting each other warmly, sharing life together, and perhaps attending "church fellowships," such as modern-day potluck dinners. Rather, Longenecker comments that in this context *koinōnia* refers to community, specifically one's local church: "The definite article (*tē*) in 'the fellowship' (*tē koinōnia*, GK 3126) implies that there was something distinctive in the gatherings of the early believers . . . a recognizable identity."<sup>30</sup> One of the tasks of a worship pastor today is to foster devotion to the local church—to true community.

Disciples in Luke's day loved the church. Pastors in God's church today must

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<sup>27</sup> J. Bradley Chance, *Acts*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2007), 59.

<sup>28</sup> Chance, *Acts*, 59.

<sup>29</sup> Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 235.

<sup>30</sup> Longenecker, *Acts*, 926.

be devoted to *the* fellowship, to the Bride of Christ (Rev 21:9), to his Body (1 Cor 12:27), to the local *ekklēsia* in which they minister. This reality is more crucial for worship pastors who themselves, and their artistic volunteers, can sometimes long for other pastures, bigger platforms, and greater influence than exists at the local church level. Acts 2:42 reminds today’s music pastors to love and serve *the fellowship*—the people over whom the Lord has made them overseers (Acts 20:28).

### **The Breaking of Bread**

The third “devoted to” element of New Testament worship from Acts 2 is “the breaking of bread” (*klasis artos*).<sup>31</sup> Luke’s historical record of the early church is reinforced by Paul’s words of institution requiring ongoing remembrance at the Table of the Lord “until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). Schnabel comments that this worship element “probably” referred both to a shared regular meal and to a remembrance of Christ’s death.<sup>32</sup> The believers would gather for a common meal “during which they remembered Jesus’ death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins and for the establishment of a new covenant.”<sup>33</sup> Schnabel further asserts that it was Paul who brought together the church’s fellowship meal with the tradition of the Last Supper (1 Cor 11). Luke uses the term “breaking of bread” (*klasis artos*, Acts 2:42) whereas Paul uses the term “the Lord’s supper” (*kyriakos deipnon*, 1 Cor 11:20). Although definitely incorporating a full meal, *klasis artos* also includes the same element of worship now labeled “communion” or

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<sup>31</sup> Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 231–32, 53.

<sup>32</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, 179. Interestingly, although older, John Polhill uses the same modifier “probably” in his commentary: “In the intimacy of a home setting, a common meal was shared together, probably including the Lord’s supper as well.” John B. Polhill, *Acts*, New American Commentary 9 (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1992), 121.

<sup>33</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, 179.

“eucharist.”<sup>34</sup> In the early church pictured in Acts 2, there would have been an actual meal attached to the liturgical observance of remembering Christ’s sacrifice.

Pastors in the twenty-first century must determine whether Acts 2:42–47 has been recorded as universal, prescriptive teaching or simply descriptive of the first century context. Should Christians sell their homes, live in communes, and share their resources with all present (vv. 44–45)? Should they daily gather at church and in homes (v. 46)? Should churches expect that thousands of new converts will result from a single day’s ministry (v. 41)? David Peterson cautions pastors not to read too much into Acts 2:42: “Luke is giving a description of the ministry of these disciples to one another in a variety of contexts, not simply telling us what happened when they gathered for what we might call ‘church.’”<sup>35</sup> It is helpful to consider Luke’s other early church descriptions (Acts 4:32–5; 5:12–16). Acts 4 and 5 are written with similar language and emphases as 2:42. The first text, chronologically, offers a list of corporate worship elements, but all three passages picture the true nature of Christian community in the early days.

Darrell Bock reminds his readers of the connection between the “breaking of bread” and the Lord’s Day (Acts 20:7), thereby giving credence to viewing 2:42 as applicable to today’s worship.<sup>36</sup> Should the Table of Christ be offered every Sunday? Should the entire church share a full meal at the Table? The apostle Paul does not provide clarity and simply counsels Corinth with the timeless phrase, “when you come together” (1 Cor 20). Questions of the Eucharist’s connection to a full meal, and of its timetable,

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<sup>34</sup> David Peterson writes,

To “break bread” was to eat together. . . . The reality of Christian fellowship was expressed from the earliest times in the ordinary activity of eating together. But these meals were doubtless given a special character by the fact that they were associated with teaching, prayer, and praise. They ate together with *glad and sincere hearts* (v. 46), and this gladness issued in *praising God* (v. 47). . . . In this way, a meal could be given the same sort of significance that Paul ascribed to the community suppers at Corinth (1 Cor. 10:16–17; 11:17–34). (David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Pillar New Testament Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009], 161)

<sup>35</sup> Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 160.

<sup>36</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 150.

fall under Augustine’s *partiliter* philosophy; meaning, local congregations are given freedom according to the needs of their own context. Augustine responded to disputes over the sacraments; some of which are observed in all places at all times (*universaliter*) and some of which “the Church observes not equally in all places” (*partiliter*).<sup>37</sup> Acknowledging that Acts 2:42 lays out general but not specific regulations of the “breaking of bread,” today’s churches are granted creative freedom in its usage. In partnership with other church staff, worship pastors are called to facilitate Communion “as often as you drink it” (1 Cor 11:25), as an impactful service “in memory of what Jesus had done for them.”<sup>38</sup>

## Prayer

Luke identifies the final aspect of early church worship as prayer. Along with the previous three components in Acts 2:42, prayer is part of a worship pastor’s must-have elements in planning and leading corporate gatherings. The noun here (*proseuchē*)<sup>39</sup> appears thirty-six times in the New Testament, nine of which are in Acts (1:4; 2:42; 3:1; 6:4; 10:4; 12:5; 16:13, 16). Luke does not use the verb form (*proseuchomai*), as if the early church devoted themselves to *praying*, although the action of prayer was naturally a byproduct of the service element of prayer. Rather, following Pentecost, the believers were continually committed to prayer as a structured feature of corporate worship. Bock explains that “the plural with the article (‘the prayers’) could suggest that some set

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<sup>37</sup> Matthew D. Westerholm, “Worshipful Reflection on Theology and Theological Reflection on Worship,” unpublished class notes for 80841 (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Winter Semester, 2021), 1. Augustine’s original writing on the subject can be found in Augustine of Hippo, *Liber Secundus: In Quo Retractantur Libri Quos Scripsit Episcopus*. in *Sancti Aurelii Augustini: Hipponensis Episcopi Opera Omnia, Post Lovaniensium Theologorum Recensionem Castigata Denuo ad Manuscriptos Codices Gallicos, Vaticanos, Belgicos, etc*, ed. J. P. Migne, Patrologia Latina 32 (Paris: Apud Garnier Fratres, 1877), 637.

<sup>38</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary*, vol. 1, *Introduction and 1:1–2:47* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 1004.

<sup>39</sup> Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 349.

prayers were used.”<sup>40</sup> Some of Jesus’s written or remembered prayers like the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6:9–10), or perhaps some of his high priestly prayer (John 17), may have been used in post-resurrection Jerusalem. Schnabel brings evidence that “the prayers” may have been a carryover from synagogue worship to include reciting the Decalogue (Exod 20) and the Shema (Deut 6:4–5).<sup>41</sup> Longenecker interprets a different prayer focus: “It is not difficult to envision them as praying extemporaneously, with those more informal prayers being built on past models—such as can be seen in Mary’s *Magnificat* (Lk 1:46–55), Zechariah’s *Benedictus* (Lk 1:67–79), and Simeon’s *Nunc Dimittis* (Lk 2:28–32).”<sup>42</sup> Whatever the case, Acts 2 points to different kinds of prayer, some spontaneous, some formally written and spoken.

Craig Keener picks up on the plural nature of Luke’s choice of wording in Acts 2:42. The believers devoted themselves to “the prayers.” Keener reflects that this could have been a reference to large corporate prayer meetings in the temple, as well as “regular times of prayer.”<sup>43</sup> The apostle Paul carries a plural prayer perspective forward in writing to Ephesus, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (Eph 6:18). As ministers of the gospel, modern worship pastors are given the biblical mandate to foster “devoted prayer” among their churches, as modeled in Acts 2:42.

### **Worship Ministry**

Some Christian thinkers understand Acts 2:42 as providing “an early pattern for corporate worship, providing the contents (though not a fixed sequence) of a

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<sup>40</sup> Bock, *Acts*, 151.

<sup>41</sup> Schnabel, *Acts*, 180.

<sup>42</sup> Longenecker, *Acts*, 928.

<sup>43</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1011.

service.”<sup>44</sup> To be sure, pastors in the twenty-first century must guide their congregants into the apostles’ teaching (the Word of God), the fellowship (their local church community of believers), the breaking of bread (Lord’s Supper), and the prayers (corporate and personal prayer). Worship pastors have a significant part to play in how they plan for these four elements within their church gatherings. The question must be asked: “Is Acts 2:42 prescriptive of the *only* worship elements to be used in the church of Christ?” The answer seems obvious because many other aspects of church life are modeled and taught in the New Testament including giving (2 Cor 9:7), prophecy (1 Cor 14:6), speaking in tongues (1 Cor 12:10), interpretation of tongues (1 Cor 12:28), laying on of hands (1 Tim 5:22), holy kiss (1 Thess 5:26), spontaneous hymns/psalms (1 Cor 14:26), and church discipline (Matt 18:15–17). The preponderance of New Testament evidence makes allowance for other forms of worship beyond the main four listed in Acts 2:42. This includes music—the main artistic/liturgical form utilized by worship pastors.

Compared to the rich choral and instrumental music tradition in the Old Testament, especially within Davidic worship, the New Testament showcases remarkably little music in the early church. Musical worship seldom appears in the Gospels and Acts. However, even though Acts 2:42 does not mention music alongside the apostles teaching, fellowship, communion, and prayer, there is evidence that music had a part to play when believers gathered. When Jesus concluded the Last Supper, Matthew and Mark both record that the disciples sang a hymn (Matt 26:30; Mark 14:26). In Acts 16:25, Paul and Silas sang hymns to God, even while in chains. It makes logical sense that if Jesus and his disciples/apostles were comfortable with singing, and shared a knowledge of hymnody, the churches they founded shared a similar musical heritage. Using sanctified and informed imagination, believers can easily read musical worship between the lines of Acts 2:42. Today’s worship pastors can feel confident that their music ministry has sure

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<sup>44</sup> Keener, *Acts*, 1000.

footing in the book of Acts. These leaders can legitimately utilize music in supporting God’s Word, the fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer in their ministries.

### **Colossians 3:15–17**

Paul’s teaching to Colossae provides instructions for those tasked with directing corporate praise. If church members ought to worship according to Colossians 3:15–17, then worship pastors need to plan and lead accordingly. Douglas Moo provides a helpful structure to verse 16, which can be used to unpack all three verses. He writes,

First, the “message about Christ” was central to the experience of worship. Second, various forms of music were integral to the experience. And, third, teaching and admonishing, while undoubtedly often the responsibility of particular gifted individuals within the congregation (such as Paul [Col. 1:28] or Epaphras [Col. 1:27] or elders [1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; see also, e.g., 1 Cor. 12:28; 2 Tim. 2:2), were engaged in by every member of the congregation.<sup>45</sup>

The following sequence of paragraphs expands on Moo’s triple structure to encompass the full three verses of Colossians 3:15–17. Worship pastors who fulfill their biblical mandate of leadership in Christ’s church must foster the indwelling peace and message of Christ, facilitating a variety of Christian songs, and teaching and admonishing their parishioners. All of these tasks are grounded in, and motivated by, thankful worship directed to the Father and empowered by the Son. This triplet of verses informs believers of proper functioning in the body and in corporate worship—the very things worship pastors invest their energy and time into.

### **Indwell the Peace and Message of Christ**

There is interesting parallelism in the Greek in Col 3:15–16 that is not obvious in the NIV. The first verse (15), translated “let the peace of God rule in your hearts,” might more literally be translated, “determine (*brabeuō*)<sup>46</sup> that the peace of God rule in

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<sup>45</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 290.

<sup>46</sup> Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 73.



(*en*) your hearts.” This is not a passive “let it happen,” but an active, directive statement. The second verse (16), translated “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly,” should instead read, “let the message of Christ dwell in (*en*) you richly.” In English, both sentences read somewhat passively, as if we should “let” God’s peace rule and “let” the Word of God dwell. However, the opposite is true. Rather than passive non-action, verse 15 directs (*brabeuō*) the believers to be determinative of God’s peace ruling in their midst. Unlike in Philippians where the peace of God, beyond understanding, descends on the faithful (Phil 4:7), here, an act of human will asks God’s peace to set up rule. Also, the phrase “dwell in you richly” (*enoikeō en sy plousiōs*) in Colossians 3:16, connotes active participation, making steps to hide God’s Word within (Ps 119:11).

Second, parallelism is seen in the word “in” (*en*). Colossians 3:15 “peace of God rule in you” parallels 3:16 “message of Christ dwell in you.” Moo comments that “the Greek word order is even the same.”<sup>47</sup> It is important to see these two verses in a corporate church context. This is less about “in” (*en*) individuals and more about “in” (*en*) the corporate church. Scot McKnight writes, “Peace is at the heart of ethics for Paul in Colossians. This peace is something connected to Christ, and as such, peace emphasizes divine initiative . . . divinely wrought.”<sup>48</sup> The two themes here—the peace of God and the message about Christ—are both based in the community. God’s peace must rule “as members of one body,” and the gospel must dwell “as you teach and admonish one another.” These parallel lines are focused on the church. The apostle Paul reminds the Colossian believers of their calling to serve the body of Christ. Worship pastors must embrace the two corporate worship mandates (peace and message) as they seek to lead faithfully in today’s world.

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<sup>47</sup> Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 285.

<sup>48</sup> Scot McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 326.

More must be said about the “message of Christ” (Col 3:16). Moo reminds us that the Greek word here, *logos*, sometimes refers to the person (Word) of God (Christ). It is also easy to read the NIV “message of Christ” as referring to Christ’s teachings. However, Moo clarifies that this is best translated by the NLT, “message about Christ.” Paul exhorts the church to place the gospel, the message about the Messiah, at the center of its corporate experience. Further, the message about Christ should “take up permanent residence” among us and it should “be constantly at the center of the community’s activities and worship.”<sup>49</sup> Nijay Gupta poetically writes that for the Colossians to let the word of Christ dwell richly means the gospel must “live among them lavishly.”<sup>50</sup> Modern musicians are naturally drawn to the newest technological gear, to the latest hit single from their favorite worship band, and to finding the next corporate praise song to enliven the imaginations of band member and church member alike. Worship pastors need to come back to the primary calling, from Colossians 3, of letting the message about Christ dwell richly in their lives, their churches, and their ministries.

### **Incorporate a Variety of Christian Song**

Colossians 3, and its parallel text in Ephesians 5, offers a glimpse of first century liturgical music genres. The three terms, “psalms, hymns, and songs from the spirit,” are interrelated. David Pao admits these three terms should not be considered synonyms.<sup>51</sup> McKnight writes that “each term connotes singing unto the Lord as ‘songs from the Spirit,’ so it is unlikely we should press distinctions between them.”<sup>52</sup> And yet,

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<sup>49</sup> Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 286.

<sup>50</sup> Nijay K. Gupta, *Colossians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2013), 145.

<sup>51</sup> David W. Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series on the New Testament 12 (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins, 2012), 246.

<sup>52</sup> McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 332.

Paul could have used a single Greek term in this text, such as the generic “song” (*ōdē*),<sup>53</sup> but he does not. There is a reason Paul utilizes this trilogy of words. Moo writes that this verse is “one of a very few that provide us with any window at all into the worship of the earliest Christians.”<sup>54</sup> The early church did not just sing in one homogeneous genre. Todd Still comments that the three terms appear to be somewhat synonymous, and yet, “When taken together, . . . these three terms reveal a rich variety of praise in the worship of the Pauline churches in particular.”<sup>55</sup> “Psalms, hymns, and songs from the spirit” form three broad categories of songs that should influence church music ministry even today.

“Psalms” are, as McKnight clarifies, “set songs in an already established singing or chanting tradition (the psalms of the Old Testament.)”<sup>56</sup> Although not clearly identified as such by Paul, there is etymological and historical evidence that the early church assumed the use of instruments with the “psalms.” Moo defines *psalms* in Greek as generally referring to a “song that is sung to the ‘plucking’ (Gk. *Psallō*) of the strings of an instrument (esp. a harp).”<sup>57</sup> John Calvin writes, a psalm “is that, in the singing of which some musical instrument besides the tongue is made use of.”<sup>58</sup> Psalm 67 hints at this interpretation by including the superscript “with stringed instruments. A psalm. A song.” Scholar N. T. Wright agrees that psalms were probably accompanied songs, but goes further:

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<sup>53</sup> The apostle John uses (*ōdē*) in Revelation 5:7 to describe the new song the four living beings and twenty-four elders sing to the Lamb before God’s throne.

<sup>54</sup> Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 290.

<sup>55</sup> Todd D. Still, *Colossians*, in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland (Grand Rapids: HarperCollins, 2017), 373.

<sup>56</sup> McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 332.

<sup>57</sup> Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 289.

<sup>58</sup> John Calvin, Calvin’s Commentaries, vol. 21, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2005), 217. Regarding his practice of restricting singing to the biblical text, Calvin pontificates against secular music with, “In place of their [unbelievers’] obscene, or at least barely modest and decent songs, it becomes you [believers] to make use of hymns and songs that sound forth God’s praise.”

“Psalms” may actually refer to the Christian use of the Old Testament psalter, but should not be restricted to that; the early church was prolific in its adaptation of Old Testament themes to Christian use (see e.g. Rev. 5:9–10; 15:3–4, etc.), and in its composition of new material (see, perhaps, Phil. 2:6–11; Col 1:15–20; 1 Tim. 3:16).<sup>59</sup>

For Wright, the psalms spoken of in Colossians 3 could have been the Old Testament psalms as well as other scriptural songs in circulation at the time of writing.<sup>60</sup> Such songs, today called *canticles*, could have included the songs from the Gospels which accompanied the birth of Christ (Magnificat, Benedictus, Gloria in Excelsis Deo, etc.) and other possible songs from the epistles. In any case, the apostle Paul’s inclusion of the term *psalmos* must be understood as songs *from* Scripture. These are songs directly based in God’s Word. This understanding would naturally flow from Paul’s exhortation to “let the word of Christ dwell richly.” One genre of worship music in the Colossian church was songs found in the Word of God. So, too, worship pastors must take seriously the need to ground some of their corporate songs as closely as possible to specific passages from the Bible—the 150 Psalms being the primary source for this grounding.

The New Testament is mysteriously silent in terms of instrumental music in the synagogue or in the church plants that Paul and others founded. Whereas the Old Testament is replete with references to trumpets, harps, lyres, timbrels, and other instruments useful in God-focused worship (1 Sam 10:5; 1 Chr 15:28; Pss 98:5; 150), the pages of the New Testament list no overt use of instruments in early church worship. Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 offer a possible hint of instrumental use as first century believers (especially those in Jerusalem) would have understood the cultural

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<sup>59</sup> N. T. Wright, *Colossians and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 12 (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008), 149.

<sup>60</sup> It is evident that the Old Testament psalter was a completed book by the time of Christ. Luke 20:42; 24:44; Acts 1:20; 13:33; and 1 Cor 14:26 each reference the Greek term (*psalmos*).

history of “psalms” as being sung to stringed accompaniment.<sup>61</sup>

“Hymns” (*hymneō*, Matt 26:30; Acts 16:25; *hymnos*, Col 3:16; Eph 5:19) seem to be songs of human composition. McKnight defines “hymns” as “the growing poetic tradition about Christ in the earliest Christian churches.”<sup>62</sup> In other words, according to McKnight, *psalms* were old covenant songs (primarily from the Psalter), while *hymns* were newly created in the New Testament era. Moo states that *hymnos* refers to religious songs and especially to songs of praise to God.<sup>63</sup> It is possible that what are called *hymns* in the New Testament were actually *psalms*. In fact, G. K. Beale goes so far as to assert, “The three terms in Colossians 3:16 refer to actual OT psalms or songs/hymns composed on the basis of such psalms, which would now be related to the new revelation of Christ.”<sup>64</sup> Beale removes the distinction and interprets the three terms as referring to “Psalms.”

But if the disciples in these texts actually sang *psalms*, why Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not use the proper term *psalmos*? Two answers are evident. First, either the disciples in Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Acts 16 actually sang a modern hymn and not one of the Old Testament psalms, or second, the term *hymnos* was commonly used in the first century as a synonym for *psalmos* and included all forms of liturgical song. Commentary on these verses, such as with Beale above, suggests a blurring of the lines between the meanings of *psalms* and *hymns*, and that modern worship leaders should not read hard demarcation between these terms into the text. Scott Aniol agrees: “Since ψαλμοῖς [*psalmos*], ὕμνοις [*hymnos*], and ᾠδαῖς [*ōdē pneumatikos*] are each used as translations

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<sup>61</sup> Another positive reference to instrumental music in the New Testament is to the sounding of the trumpet at the return of Christ (Matt 24:31; 1 Cor 15:42; and 1 Thess 4:16). Trumpets sound numerous times in John’s revelation and are used to accompany angelic announcements of God’s judgments (Rev 9:13–14; 10:7; and 11:15).

<sup>62</sup> McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, 332.

<sup>63</sup> Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 289.

<sup>64</sup> G. K. Beale, *Colossians and Philemon*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 30.

of psalm titles in the LXX and are employed interchangeably in the NT, the weight of the evidence seems to suggest that Paul did not intend the terms to designate clearly identifiable genre of corporate song.”<sup>65</sup> Many modern scholars contend that little demarcation exists between the three musical terms in Colossians 3.

Having said this, the triplet of musical choice in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 cannot be summarily dismissed. Paul *could* have used one term for music, but he chose three. Was he simply utilizing poetic repetition as Andrew Lincoln suggests?<sup>66</sup> Even though we may not be able to sharply identify the meaning of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, we must assume that Paul considered musical variety part of the Colossian and Ephesian churches. This leads us to the final term identified by Paul, spiritual songs.

The third category of liturgical song, delineated by Paul, is most often translated “spiritual songs.”<sup>67</sup> A lesser-used but perhaps better translation of *ōdē pneumatikos*, following the Greek word order, is “songs from the Spirit” (NIV, NIRV). This is made clearer when studying the structure here. *Odē* is a very generic term simply referring to the most basic word “song.” Paul knows that not just any song is fitting for the worship of Christ. There must be spiritual content consistent with the “word of Christ” dwelling richly.

Several commentators identify *pneumatikos* as being an adjective to *ōdē*, therefore making *spiritual songs*. Moo places *pneumatikos* following *ōdē*, calling these spontaneous songs, prompted by the Spirit.<sup>68</sup> This seems to fit the common usage of

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<sup>65</sup> Scott Aniol, “Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs: Assessing the Debate,” *Artistic Theologian*, April 10, 2018, <https://artistictheologian.com/2018/04/10/psalms-hymns-and-spiritual-songs-assessing-the-debate/>.

<sup>66</sup> Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 346.

<sup>67</sup> The word choice “spiritual songs” is seen in many translations including NLT, NKJV, NASB, and ESV.

<sup>68</sup> Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 290.

*pneumatikos* elsewhere in the New Testament not referring to the human spirit, but something received from God’s Spirit. First Corinthians 2:13 uses *pneumatikos* in “words taught by the Spirit.” Two verses later Paul speaks of the “person with the Spirit.” Later in Corinthians we read of the “gifts of the Spirit” (1 Cor 12:1; 14:1, 37) and in Galatians, we are to “live by the Spirit” (Gal 6:1). In Colossians 1:9, we read of the blessing of the “wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives.” In Peter’s epistle, the Lord, like a master contractor, crafts believers (living stones) into a spiritual house (1 Pet 2:5). These many New Testament references are about God’s work in or for us, not referencing our own human spirits. So, Moo writes, “the translation ‘from the Spirit’ is also appropriate, since it preserves the distinctive role of the Spirit that is basic to Paul’s thinking; ‘spiritual,’ especially in modern English, is too vague to capture this sense.”<sup>69</sup>

Perhaps the song of Moses and Miriam (Exod 15) is an Old Testament example of a song from the Spirit. There is no evidence that Moses put pen to paper and engaged the laws of songwriting in praising God for his rescue of Israel across the Red Sea. Rather, the Song of Moses and Meriam seems to have been a spontaneous response to the Lord, from hearts overflowing with gratitude and thanks.<sup>70</sup> After the song’s public debut in Exodus 15, it would have been written down by Moses at a later date. Perhaps the *Magnificat* is a New Testament example of a song from the Spirit as Mary sang the personal worship lyric “my soul magnifies the Lord” (Luke 1:46).<sup>71</sup>

Scott Aniol, as part of his exploration of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,

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<sup>69</sup> Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 290.

<sup>70</sup> Christopher Seitz likewise equates the Song of Moses and Miriam with *spiritual song*. “Isaiah spoke of a “new song” (42:10), perhaps a song to join the old praises of Miriam as a new exodus unfolds.” Christopher R. Seitz, *Colossians*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2014), 164.

<sup>71</sup> Hustad makes the connection to African American music: “All the colonists knew ‘psalms’ and ‘hymns’—the former were common to all Christian groups. . . So, when these new simpler, popular forms appeared [spontaneous singing of brushharbour meetings], they were given the remaining title found in Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16—‘spiritual songs,’ later shortened to ‘spirituals.’” Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1993), 227.

writes, “The weight of evidence seems to suggest that Paul did not intend the terms to designate clearly identifiable genre of corporate song.”<sup>72</sup> However, even without delineating songs, hymns, and songs from the Spirit in exacting measure, a plain reading of the text suggests various kinds of songs in corporate worship. Lawrence Richards and Gary Bredfeldt remind the reader, “The rule of customary meaning simply states that the very words of the Bible are to be taken for what they communicate. We follow a simple principle: When the natural, normal sense of the Scripture makes sense, seek no other sense.”<sup>73</sup> Since Paul uses three separate Greek words here, we should not be hasty in fusing them into one, thereby losing any sense of uniqueness he may have intended. Aniol’s final implication reads, “At the very least they [Christian churches] should sing inspired psalms.”<sup>74</sup> Aniol’s use of the descriptor “inspired” expands psalms to the totality of Scripture (*all* Scripture is inspired by God, 2 Tim 3:16). The Bride of Christ should sing the songs of the Lord. After all, *psalms* are clearly the very Word of God, *hymns* are a combination of biblical text and newer songs based on scriptural truths, and *songs from the Spirit*, although more spontaneous in nature, are likewise rich in God’s revealed Word. Today’s worship pastors can use creativity in finding songs—rich in the gospel—for their congregants to sing to each other and to the Lord.

### **Teach and Admonish through the Arts**

Worship pastors need to carefully study Colossians 3:15–17 and pay attention to the object(s) of these sentences. These music leaders are often inclined to think of corporate worship as being focused on God. After all, worship is presented to an audience of One. To be sure, the first commandment demands that Christians venerate the One and

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<sup>72</sup> Aniol, “Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs.”

<sup>73</sup> Lawrence O. Richards and Gary J. Bredfeldt, *Creative Bible Teaching* (Chicago: Moody, 2020), 73, Kindle.

<sup>74</sup> Aniol, “Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs.”



true God, and him alone (Exod 20). Worship pastors do well to remind their congregations of the vertical reality of worship; of approaching the Sovereign Lord who is in his holy temple, and that silence before his awesome presence is the proper posture (Hab 2:20).

However, Colossians also imparts a horizontal aspect of worship. Paul writes believers are to “teach and admonish one another . . . through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit” (Col 3:16). In Ephesians, God’s people are to speak to one another using the same musical triad (Eph 5:19). Pao connects edification with doxology here: “While songs of praise are addressed ‘to God,’ they are also instruments for instructing ‘one another.’ In merging the vertical with the horizontal, the content of worship thereby acquires added significance.”<sup>75</sup> Corporate worship, then, travels more than just heavenward, it flows outward to others to encourage growth, faith, and obedience. Today’s worship pastors, as musical shepherds, should remember to plan and lead services with “the body” in mind. In my singing to God, I teach and admonish those beside me. Using notes, lyrics, and rhythms, I declare biblical truth to those singing with me. This is the horizontal aspect of corporate worship. This is the fulfilment of the “one another” imperative in Colossians 3:16.

However, there is yet another direction of worship in this text, a less obvious focus. Not only is corporate worship *vertical* (to God), and *horizontal* (to one another); but it is also *personal* (to oneself). Paul writes that we are to “sing with gratitude *in your hearts*.” The parallel text, written to the church in Ephesus, refers to “singing and making melody *in your heart* to the Lord” (Eph 5:19 NKJV). There is always an internal aspect of praise, like the psalmist who sings to himself, “Bless the Lord, O my soul” (Ps 103:1). Seitz, connecting 3:16 with the previous verse (3:15), writes, “*Heart* refers to the seat of the will and center of a person’s decision making and is not an individual

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<sup>75</sup> Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 252.

emotional location separate from mind and will.”<sup>76</sup> In other words, believers are to sing to the Lord, personally, from the very center of their souls.

Worship pastors across Canada are given the biblical mandate, from Colossians 3:15–17, to participate in teaching and preaching. This does not mean that a worship pastor should usurp the role of preacher in their church. However, it is clear that the calling of a worship pastor in Colossians 3 is not simply to teach music; the calling is to teach gospel wisdom *through* music. There is an obvious connection between “the message about Christ” (*logos Christos*) and “all wisdom” (*pas sophia*). The wisdom church leaders impart to others comes from the “only wise God” (Rom 16:27). Songs of worship reach up vertically in praise to God, reach out horizontally to teach and admonish others, and reach in personally to edify the life of the believer.

### **Approach Life and Ministry with God-Directed Thankfulness**

The final phrase of Colossians 3:16, “with gratitude in your hearts,” and the thrust of verse 17, “giving thanks to God the Father,” tie back to verse 15, “and be thankful.” Paul is writing thematically here, and perhaps even poetically with the triple repeat of “thankful,” “gratitude,” and “giving thanks.” N. T. Wright explains, “The center of Christian living is grateful worship, which is to effect ‘whatever we do’: since ‘all things’ have been created through Christ.”<sup>77</sup> Pao comments, “Everyday living in worship through thanksgiving is a series of liturgical acts through which every part of our being is to be convinced thoroughly by our acts of submission that Christ is indeed the Lord of our existence. . . . Through acts of thanksgiving, we are called to repent and return to the one who alone deserves our worship and adoration.”<sup>78</sup> Pao is correct; an attitude of

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<sup>76</sup> Seitz, *Colossians*, 164.

<sup>77</sup> Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 150.

<sup>78</sup> Pao, *Colossians and Philemon*, 252.

gratitude is the believer's only obedient response.

Paul's use of "word and deed" (3:17) is somewhat synonymous with the psalmist's use of "let everything [*kōl*] that has breath" (Ps 150:6). In Psalm 150, every living being (primarily humanity) is to praise the Lord. In Colossians 3:17, every faithful child of God is to praise the Lord with everything in them. Moo writes,

The combination "Word" (*logos*) and "deed" (*ergon*) is a common way of referring to the totality of one's interaction with the world (Luke 24:19; Acts 7:22; Rom 15:18; 2 Thess 2:17; cf. 1 Cor 10:31): everything, including what we say and what we do, should be governed by the consideration of what it means to live in the realm of the risen Christ.<sup>79</sup>

Paul gives two directives in Colossians 3:17. The first has already been covered, namely, whatever you do, do it with thankfulness to God the Father. The second directive actually comes sequentially first in the text, namely, whatever you do, do it in the name of Christ (Col 3:17).

It is into Christ's name converts are baptized (Matt 28:19; Acts 2:38). The name of Christ brings healing (Acts 3:6, 16), salvation (Acts 4:12; 1 John 5:13), boldness in witness (Acts 5:40; 9:27), high honor (Acts 19:17), judgment (1 Cor 5:3), persecution (1 Pet 4:14), and thankfulness (Col 3:17; Eph 5:20). Confessing the name of the Lord demands confession of sin (2 Tim 2:19). It is in the name of Jesus that we have access to the Father in prayer (1 Cor 1:2; Jas 5:14). Paul writes that the Colossian believers ought to glorify God in the *name* of Jesus and give God thanks *through* Jesus. Moo rightly identifies this language as a "sign of high Christology in this letter."<sup>80</sup> Andreas Köstenberger, Scott Kellum, and Charles Quarles write of Christ's sovereign rule over his disciples, "Christ's lordship extends to one's personal holiness, family life, work life, and everything in between ('whatever you do, in word or in deed,' 3:17)."<sup>81</sup> The private lives

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<sup>79</sup> Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 291.

<sup>80</sup> Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 291.

<sup>81</sup> Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, 700.

and public ministries of worship pastors need to sing the message of Christ, signify the name of Christ, and serve in thanksgiving to God.

Much can be unpacked in the three trinitarian verses of Colossians 3:15–17. Paul provides a summary *telos* for the gathered church. Why does a church assemble? What should a church be about? What should worship pastors pour their energies into? The church gathers as members of Christ’s body in peaceable Christ-focused unity. The church sings various songs of the message and wisdom of Christ, thereby admonishing each other toward love and good deeds, and bringing heartfelt praise to God. The church (through its members) submits every action taken and word spoken to the name of Christ, directing thanksgiving to the Father. Thinking like a worship pastor, Nijay Gupta advises leaders, “Consider for your own worshiping community how the time of singing operates for you. Is it participatory? Is it celebratory (not necessarily always, but often)? Is it didactic—does it pass along the Christian tradition?”<sup>82</sup> These are excellent questions for worship pastors to consider; the very church staff members tasked with facilitating these purposes in the assembly of the saints.

## **2 Timothy 2:2 and 4:5**

The above three Scriptures focus on Davidic worship (1 Chr 15–16), early church worship (Acts 2:42), and Pauline instructions for the church (Col 3:16–18). These texts deal with leadership and creativity in the liturgical arts and with the hallmarks of corporate worship. In this final biblical passage Paul advises Timothy in the area of pastoral leadership. Paul’s teaching on investing his leadership in others necessitates the same in every pastoral role today. This directive has three parts: the *message* and *method* of leadership, “And the things you have heard me say . . . entrust to reliable people who will be qualified to teach others” (2 Tim 2:2), and the *marks* of leadership, “keep your

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<sup>82</sup> Gupta, *Colossians*, 156.

head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Tim 4:5). The following paragraphs provide a biblical rationale for worship pastors in their triple calling from the book of second Timothy, to faithfully fulfill the *message, method, and marks* of leadership.

### **The Message of Leadership (2 Tim 2:2)**

Whether one’s focus is on leading corporate worship, teaching kids, discipling youth, or preaching Sunday sermons, all Christian leaders with the title “pastor” have a message to share. This message is the gospel and is unpacked greatly by Paul in 2 Timothy. The opening paragraphs of Paul’s letter include the words/phrases: “the testimony” (1:8), “the gospel” (1:8, 10, 11), “herald, apostle, teacher” (1:11), “heard from me” (1:13), “pattern of sound teaching” (1:13), “good deposit” (1:14), “the things you have heard me say” (2:2), “entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others” (2:2), “this is my gospel” (2:8), and “God’s Word is not chained” (2:9). These texts all connect to the message of the gospel in some way, either to the story of the gospel itself or to those who share it. I. Howard Marshall notices the “deposit theme” in 2 Timothy 1:11–14, which is seen again in the recapitulation of 2:2: “The call is to loyalty to Paul and his gospel both in Timothy’s own life and through gathering a team of faithful workers for the future to whom Paul’s deposit can be passed.”<sup>83</sup> Marshall sees the “deposit” as the gospel message itself: “What is important here is the message, and the ‘reliable men’ are important only in that they preserve and teach it and not because of any office that they hold. . . . Certainly, the passing on of the teaching is in the foreground.”<sup>84</sup> Pastors, regardless of subtitle (senior, youth, worship, etc.) are given the primary calling of communicating the gospel.

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<sup>83</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 723.

<sup>84</sup> Marshall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 726–27.

Since Paul writes generically of “the things you have heard me say” (2:2), the reader is left to discover what these “things” are. The closest and most likely connection is to 2 Timothy 1:8–14, where Paul describes the gospel, his mission in it, and directs Timothy to keep as a pattern of sound teaching that which he heard from his mentor. The striking similarity of language between 2 Timothy 1:13 and 2 Timothy 2:2 cannot be ignored. Robert Yarbrough writes that these “things” would “surely include the preaching of Paul like that recorded in Acts and his teaching preserved in his extant epistles.”<sup>85</sup> The “things” to entrust to others are the *message* of Christ; the good news of his salvation available for all.

Thanks to the printing press and the internet, much of today’s information is transferred in written form. However, two thousand years ago, information was transmitted mainly via speech. People of the early church relied heavily on oral tradition. Perhaps this is why Yarbrough observes,

Timothy had “heard” from, indeed had been hand-trained by, Paul, and hearing is the quintessential posture through which God’s redemption had come to his people (see Deut 6:4; Rom 10:17; Gal 3:2, 5). Jesus’s work centered on preaching and teaching is in line with this emphasis. Redemption had certainly come to Timothy, not in some isolated desert experience but in the community of other believers, including fellow Pauline coworkers (“witnesses” to the saving gospel message).<sup>86</sup>

The “presence of many witnesses” (2 Tim 2:2) is yet another indication that the gospel message must be spoken, publicly and with courage.<sup>87</sup> Romans 10:9 showcases the connection between salvation and verbal gospel proclamation, “If you declare with your

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<sup>85</sup> Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 372.

<sup>86</sup> Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 372

<sup>87</sup> Commentators variously define these “witnesses” as: fellow apostles and church planters (Yarbrough, Lock), the church at large (Marshall), or anyone who likewise heard Paul preach and could corroborate Timothy’s teaching (Mounce, Lock). It is interesting that English translations render this word as “witnesses” and not martyrs (after the Greek word μάρτυς – *martyrs*). After all, the same Greek word is found in Acts 22:20, referring to the martyr Stephen. Perhaps Paul, in 2 Timothy 2:2, is calling on Timothy to remember the faithfulness and commitment of those who have already been martyred for Christ; those who, like in Hebrews 12:1, are a “great cloud of witnesses/martyrs.”

mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord’ . . . you will be saved.”

According to Paul, the *message* of leadership *is* the gospel, and it must be passed on. This is challenging for modern worship pastors who often find themselves burdened with learning new music, coaching band members, and upgrading church tech gear. Unfortunately, it is natural for music pastors to be concerned with the mechanics of leadership and to allow the main message (gospel) to become secondary. Faithful worship pastors must embrace their calling as gospel heralds—through the medium of musical and artistic worship. If the chief message a church proclaims is anything other than the gospel of Christ, that church treads on shaky ground, perhaps entirely devoid of the Spirit’s power. Worship pastors have a key communicative role on Sundays. The songs they lead and the words they say between songs must reinforce the message of Christ’s death, resurrection, soon return, and saving power.

### **Method of Leadership (2 Tim 2:2)**

Second Timothy not only describes the *message* to be shared, but also a leadership strategy (*method*) which should be developed in every church or Christian ministry. The modern term is “leadership multiplication.” Paul counsels Timothy to entrust his message (the gospel) to “reliable men who will be qualified to teach others” (2:2). There is an intentional leadership succession at work here. Just like Jethro counseled Moses to diversify his influence (Exod 18:17–23), Paul counsels Timothy to do the same. The only difference is that Jethro did so for the sake of Moses’s sanity whereas Paul did so for the sake of the gospel message.<sup>88</sup>

In modern stage plays, understudies for theatrical lead roles are chosen carefully. These *secondo* actors are basically just as skilled and committed as their *primo*

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<sup>88</sup> Interestingly, the descriptors in Exodus 18:21 (capable, trustworthy) are strikingly similar to 2 Timothy 2:2 (reliable, qualified). These are also similar to the qualifications of elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 (above reproach, faithful to his wife, respectable, able to teach, good reputation).

counterparts. Likewise, the caliber of people that leaders train to replace themselves, matters. The message to be delivered by Timothy was to be given to those capable of success. Kent Hughes reminds the reader of Timothy’s history at work here. In 2 Timothy 1:14, the gospel was delegated to him: “Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.” Hughes claims, “Here in chapter 2 Timothy is charged to further delegate the gospel deposit as a part of his ministerial responsibility.”<sup>89</sup> Thus far, Timothy had reliably carried the gospel and was tasked with finding other reliable believers to do the same. This is the *method* of biblical leadership. Fee explains that the term “reliable” does not refer to their position but to their character.<sup>90</sup> Mounce likewise comments that this is not to be understood as institutional succession, as if the main goal is the passing on of power. Rather, Timothy is to find believers of trustworthy character.<sup>91</sup>

Here, again, is a timely methodological reminder for today’s pastors—the gospel must be taught to others, who can also pass on its life-giving truths. Mounce comments that “Paul has always been interested in the transfer of tradition.”<sup>92</sup> This is the mission of worship pastors who are often highly skilled as musicians. It is a fallacy to believe that because of professional training a church staff member in charge of music is the only one suited for platform ministry. Lay leadership must be developed. This is part of discipleship. A faithful and mature believer seeks someone younger in the faith to mentor in the ways of the Lord and in service for him. Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles remind us of the four generations represented in 2 Timothy 2:2: Paul, Timothy, faithful men, and others. “For both Jesus and Paul, therefore, the key to the successful

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<sup>89</sup> R. Kent Hughes and Bryan Chapell, *1–2 Timothy and Titus: To Guard the Deposit, Preaching the Word* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 193. Hughes answers the textual hermeneutical question *How should the good deposit be guarded?* with, “Guard it by delegation.”

<sup>90</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 240.

<sup>91</sup> William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary 46 (Grand Rapids: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 506.

<sup>92</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 505.



spread of the Christian faith lay in multiplying faithful generations of Christian witnesses. This places a premium on faithfulness, for if any one generation is unfaithful, the chain of witnesses is broken and the tradition is distorted.”<sup>93</sup> This is the *method* of pastoral leadership. Worship pastors have this same responsibility—to develop the gifting of others and launch them into gospel service.

Canadian worship pastors are tasked with many things: crafting services, directing music groups, leading corporate worship, and often facilitating the other artistic and technological ministries in orbit around them. However, if their work hours are entirely absorbed by these important items, the ministry will ultimately fail. There must be a foundational commitment to leadership development, the *method* of the gospel *message* to be passed on to the next generation. Guitar pedals and lighting effects come and go, but the Word of the Lord remains forever.

### **The Marks of Leadership (2 Tim 4:5)**

Every pastor wants to discover the best practices of leadership—the things that work well in developing their own gifting and also that of others. As seen previously, one of Paul’s “best practices,” his *method*, included passing on his *message*—the gospel of Christ. After his rich teaching to Timothy about this message, Paul again returns to the theme of leadership development, this time about the character of a faithful leader. Paul writes, “But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Tim 4:5). This verse introduces the reader to four *marks* of leadership: stability, resilience, evangelism, and commitment. Each of these characteristics will be explored in what follows.

The first Greek term (*nēphō*), translated in the NIV “keep your head,” seems to

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<sup>93</sup> Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, 745.

include the aspects of sober-mindedness, or being calm and collected in spirit.<sup>94</sup> Here is the leadership requirement of being stable and calm when confronted with a ministerial storm. Hughes relates that “Timothy was to literally be sober and cool in all circumstances. . . . Stability must characterize the preacher in an upside-down world.”<sup>95</sup> The end goal is to finish well and thus Walter Lock ties in 2 Timothy 4:7, “I have finished the race,” to the self-control of the athlete in training.<sup>96</sup> At face value, the meaning of “keep your head” seems straightforward.

However, these two explanations seem weak when compared to the commentary of Mounce. He writes that,

“To be clear-minded, sober” in the historical context is a call to Timothy to “steer clear of the heady wine of heretical teaching” (Kelly, 207) but is also understood in a more general sense of clear-mindedness in all his ministry, “in everything” (cf. 2:7; 1 Tim 3:11; Titus 2:9–10). Paul uses the same verb to call all Christians to be sober as they await Christ’s return.<sup>97</sup>

Mounce challenges pastors to think on the seriousness of their calling. There is no room in Christian leadership for laissez-faire theological conviction. Paul’s qualifier “in all situations” reinforces this expectation.

Cultural voices today are many and they are strong—calling pastors to “buy this book,” “attend this conference,” “embrace this church growth technique,” or “accept this new teaching.” Pastors must be careful, as Paul counseled Timothy, to “keep our head.” Although not primarily called to be preachers, music pastors likewise need to stay on the right paths of theology, ecclesiology, and ministry to be stable and steadfast in all they do. This is the first mark of Pauline leadership.

The second Greek term (*kakopatheō*), translated “endure hardship” (2 Tim

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<sup>94</sup> Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 277.

<sup>95</sup> Hughes and Chapell, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 247.

<sup>96</sup> Walter Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2014), 113.

<sup>97</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 576.

4:5), is only found three times in the New Testament. Earlier in 2 Timothy, Paul writes, “for which I am suffering (*kakopatheō*) even to the point of being chained like a criminal” (2 Tim 2:9).<sup>98</sup> Here, Paul admits that he “suffers hardship.” Finally, James asks, “Is anyone among you in trouble (*kakopatheō*)?” (Jas 5:13). Apostles Paul and James both admit that suffering is part of the life of faith. Further, Paul counsels Timothy to expect hardship and to endure it faithfully. There seems to be a linguistic connection between enduring hardship and the challenges mentioned earlier in the chapter: “correct, rebuke” (v. 2), “people will not put up with sound doctrine” (v. 3), “they will turn aside to myths” (v. 4), and “keep your head in all situations” (v. 5).

These challenges all relate to standing firm in the gospel. Mounce connects “hardship” and gospel ministry: “Paul willingly suffers evil for the gospel (2:9) and has already called Timothy to share in suffering for the gospel (1:8). Here Timothy is called to persevere in his ministry even if that entails suffering for it (cf. 2:3–7).”<sup>99</sup> Hughes identifies that enduring hardship should not come as a surprise and is a “recurring theme in the Pastorals.”<sup>100</sup> Surely, hardship and opposition accompany believers “taking up their cross” (Matt 16:24). Worship pastors the world over, and certainly in Canada, need the reminder of Paul that a second mark of leadership is to endure difficulties for the eternal sake of the glorious gospel.

The third Greek phrase, *poieō ergon euangelistēs*, is translated in the NIV “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim 4:5). *Euangelistēs* is literally, “one who announces good tidings; an evangelist, preacher of the Gospel.”<sup>101</sup> This definition fits with 2 Timothy 2:2 where Timothy, as a messenger, is to pass on the message of Christ to

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<sup>98</sup> Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 210.

<sup>99</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 576.

<sup>100</sup> Hughes and Chapell, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 247.

<sup>101</sup> Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 172.

reliable people who will, in turn, entrust the same story to others. Hughes writes: “The gospel was to be Timothy’s lifework. . . . The good news was to be constantly on his lips.”<sup>102</sup> Again, Mounce delves more deeply: “While good works are a goal for all Christians (cf. 1 Tim 2:10), for Timothy specifically his good work is to do the work of an ‘evangelist.’ This is Timothy’s spiritual gift to which Paul previously referred (1:6; cf. 1 Tim 1:18). The emphasis of the word is on the task of one so gifted; it does not describe a church office.”<sup>103</sup> Timothy’s pastoral work included serving within his gifting—in evangelism.

Lock explains that Timothy is to “do the work of one who has a Gospel, not myths and genealogies, to teach, who lays stress on ‘Jesus Christ risen from the dead’ (2:8), and on the whole of my Gospel (1:8, 1:10, 2:8).”<sup>104</sup> Whether blessed with the gift of evangelism or not, modern pastors should embrace Paul’s directive of evangelical work. Evangelistic zeal is the third mark of leadership. As they plan services, sing with a microphone, play guitar, disciple someone one-on-one, or lead a choir, worship pastors proclaim the gospel and thereby “do the work of an evangelist.” The Canadian church needs pastors who are passionate to fulfill this calling.

The fourth Greek phrase, *plērophoreō sy diakonia*, translated in the NIV “discharge all the duties of your ministry,” is rendered in the Greek more simply as “fulfill your ministry.”<sup>105</sup> However, the NIV is right to use the verb “discharge,” as the emphasis is stronger than the term “fulfill” conveys. *Plērophoreō* means to carry through to the end or to accomplish.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Hughes and Chapell, *1–2 Timothy and Titus*, 247.

<sup>103</sup> Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 576.

<sup>104</sup> Lock, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, 113–14.

<sup>105</sup> Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 329, 92.

<sup>106</sup> Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 329.

This final directive that Timothy fulfills is a significant mark of leadership for Paul. A faithful leader fights the good fight, runs the race, keeps the faith (2 Tim 4:7), is poured out fully (2 Tim 4:6), and ultimately, discharges all the duties of his/her ministry (2 Tim 4:5). Paul leaves Timothy with this final ministry instruction because as he nears his “departure” (2 Tim 4:6). Paul wants Timothy to carry on in gospel success. A music pastor must be a faithful servant to the end.

Commitment and dedication are required for church worship staff members to minister right, minister well, and minister fully. Worship pastors, like preaching pastors, are called to serve with whole-hearted devotion, seeking to use their talents wisely and fully for the Master. The book of 2 Timothy provides the *message, method, and marks* of biblical leadership. Worship pastors around the globe do well to heed these pearls of Pauline wisdom.

### **Conclusion**

The writings of the Old Testament Chronicler and the apostles Paul and Luke make significant contributions to the field of corporate musical leadership. Theological foundations for the role of worship pastor are discovered within the books of 1 Chronicles, Acts, Colossians, and 2 Timothy. Such pastoral foundations include musical leadership, visionary oversight, delegation and leadership succession, worship service elements, ideals of Christian community, vertical, horizontal, and personal worship, Word-centered ministry, and the message, method, and marks of biblical ministry. Churches across Canada need worship pastors who are diligent in applying the Bible to service planning and leading and also passionate about diversifying and multiplying their own leadership.

CHAPTER 3  
THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL, AND HISTORICAL  
ISSUES RELATED TO THE ROLE  
OF THE WORSHIP PASTOR

The ecclesial staff role now often referred to as “worship pastor” or “music director” includes much more than leading songs on Sunday mornings. Thousands of years of Old and New Testament teaching and modeling and the Christian church tradition of corporate musical leadership have led to the full slate of responsibilities today’s music pastors manage. The following chapter will demonstrate that the role of a modern worship pastor is founded on historical antecedents of the position, the conviction of gospel proclamation, the spiritual ministry of a shepherd, and the commitment to equip the next generation of leaders.

**Historical Antecedents**

The role of the worship pastor is not an invention of the twenty-first century. This role did not suddenly arise with the dawn of guitars and praise bands. The role of music pastor has antecedents in church history. From Old Testament times to the early church and today, God’s gathered people have been led by leaders divinely gifted to do so.

**Old Testament: David**

Prior to David’s reign, Israel’s decentralized nature was not conducive to professionally trained orchestras and choirs. There is no evidence that King Saul worked to advance this part of the cultus. Don Hustad explains, “The full vocal-instrumental glory of formal Hebrew worship seemed to emerge with King David, the musician-

composer; 1 Chronicles 13:1–8 and 15:14–28.”<sup>1</sup> David was the first leader of Israel who truly assembled the Levites as leaders of corporate praise.<sup>2</sup> Andrew Hill and John Walton rightly comment that David is the prime mover of this new system—a system sanctioned by him.<sup>3</sup> According to Charles Etherington, history demonstrates just how effective and long-lasting David’s Levitical reforms were. Nehemiah 12:35–36, 45–56 record that the worship traditions of David had been preserved at least until the time of the exile and were likely maintained until the destruction of the temple in AD 70.<sup>4</sup> As an administrator of Levitical ministry, David is a pattern for modern music pastors.

David’s songs listed in 2 Samuel 22, Psalm 7, and Psalm 18 were sung “to the Lord.” Not enough information is given as to whether David ever led the people in the singing of his own songs. He commissioned Kenaniah, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun, and others to do so (1 Chr 15:22, 27; 16:4–7; 25:1). If not directly, David is a vicarious worship leader. Jonathan Edwards agrees: “He [David] led the whole church of Israel in their praises. He delivered to the church the book of songs they were to use in their ordinary public worship.”<sup>5</sup> Reggie Kidd labels David as “Israel’s architect of praise,”<sup>6</sup> which is a fitting descriptor.

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<sup>1</sup> Donald P. Hustad, *Jubilate II: Church Music in Worship and Renewal* (Carol Stream, IL: Hope, 1993), 133.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Hill clarifies, “It was King David who reorganized the Levitical priesthood and prescribed their new tasks (1 Chr 23–24).” Andrew E. Hill, *Enter His Courts with Praise! Old Testament Worship for the New Testament Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 140.

<sup>3</sup> Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Carr, 1991), 224. Although not canonical, several of the Apocryphal books reference David and his accomplishments. “Holy singers also, the sons of Asaph, were in their order, according to the appointment of David, to wit, Asaph, Zacharias, and Jeduthun, who was of the king’s retinue” (1 Esd 1:15). “The priests stood arrayed in their vestments with musical instruments and trumpets; and the Levites the sons of Asaph had cymbals, singing songs of thanksgiving, and praising the Lord, according as David the king of Israel had ordained” (1 Esd 5:59–60; similarly in Ezra 3:10).

<sup>4</sup> Charles L. Etherington, *Protestant Worship Music: Its History and Practice* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1962), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas T. Batzig, “Jonathan Edwards on David as a Type of Christ,” *Feeding on Christ*, February 18, 2014, <https://feedingonchrist.org/jonathan-edwards-on-david-as-a-type-of-christ/>.

<sup>6</sup> Reggie M. Kidd, *With One Voice: Discovering Christ’s Song in Our Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005), 63.

David’s last official public appearance is in leading the people in prayer (1 Chr 29:10–19). In this prayer, the most common verbal expression of adoration is the Hebrew *bârak* (v. 10 twice, v. 13 once, v. 20 twice). This term, often translated in English as either “to bless/to praise” is defined by Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles Briggs as “kneel.”<sup>7</sup> *Bârak* seems to imply a physical attitude of submission as verse 20 records: “So they praised (*bârak*) the Lord, the God of their fathers; they bowed low and fell prostrate (*qâdad*) before the Lord and the king.” Here, David leads the people in a proper posture to accompany their praise—prostration. David, as a leader and organizer of Israel’s worship, is an antecedent for today’s music pastors.

## New Testament

Although descriptions of corporate worship are limited in the New Testament, and examples of musical leadership are non-existent, there is warrant for the role of worship pastor in the new covenant. The leader of the synagogue, and even synagogue rabbi, held a similar role to that of a contemporary worship planner. Elmer Towns and Vernon Whaley summarize the setting: “In the temple, the emphasis was upon establishing a relationship with God through sacrifice. The synagogue’s emphasis was upon instruction and worship.”<sup>8</sup> Towns and Whaley further explain:

Synagogue worship was essentially a service of the Word and prayer. The service was congregational, involving a rabbi and a group of laypersons that often participated in the readings, prayers, and open discussions. Synagogue worship followed the Hebrew calendar, including: (1) observance of the annual cycle of feasts and festivals, (2) a cyclical schedule of Scripture readings using a Hebrew lectionary, and (3) prayers according to the seasons.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), 138.

<sup>8</sup> Elmer L. Towns and Vernon M. Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages: How the Great Awakenings Shape Evangelical Worship* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2012), 41.

<sup>9</sup> Towns and Whaley, *Worship through the Ages*, 40. See also Andrew Wilson-Dickson, *The Story of Christian Music: From Gregorian Chant to Black Gospel. An Illustrated Guide to All the Major Traditions of Music in Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1992), 22–23.



This description of synagogue worship helps the reader envision all that was required of local liturgical leadership at that time. Paul Westermeyer broadens the discussion by reminding the student of history of temple worship:

The first Christians were Jews. . . . In Jerusalem, . . . until it [the temple] was destroyed in 70 A.D., . . . a large group of professional instrumentalists and singers from the tribe of Levi led the music. The texts probably included some Psalms and Psalm-like narratives such as the song of Deborah (Judges 5) and the song of Moses (Exod 15:1–18). The people probably sang some of these well-known texts from memory.<sup>10</sup>

Worship elements such as those described above (festivals, Scripture readings, prayers) are the very things worship pastors are called to plan and lead today. Webber finds three models of worship in the New Testament: House Church Worship (Acts 2:42–47), Body Life Worship (1 Cor 12), and Liturgical Worship (Rev 4; 5; 6; 10; 11; 13; 15; 19). Robert Webber contends these three “broad traditions of worship . . . are being continued in the contemporary church.”<sup>11</sup> Today’s worship directors can find precedent in the ministry of Apostolic Era pastors.

As opposed to Westermeyer’s analysis, Bruce Shields and David Butzu pinpoint that “sources are silent about music in the synagogues.”<sup>12</sup> They further state, “There is now no known evidence that even the Psalms were sung in synagogue services.”<sup>13</sup> This assertion is far-fetched as the recitation of the Scriptures was very likely chanted, if not sung.<sup>14</sup> Although not formalized as in the days of Solomon’s temple, church song was a known commodity in the first century (Matt 26:30; Acts 16:25; Rom

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Westermeyer, *Te Deum: The Church and Music* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 41.

<sup>11</sup> Robert E. Webber, *Rediscovering the Missing Jewel: A Study in Worship through the Centuries* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997), 9–12.

<sup>12</sup> Bruce E. Shields and David A. Butzu, *Generations of Praise: The History of Worship* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 2006), 29.

<sup>13</sup> Shields and Butzu, *Generations of Praise*, 29.

<sup>14</sup> “Singing was simply assumed in all worship. Lessons and prayers, for example, were intoned. . . . As long as the Christians were Jews, the musical practice of Jewish chant prevailed.” Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 42–43.

15:9; 1 Cor 14:15; Eph 5:19; Col 3:16; Heb 2:12; Jas 5:13). Church leaders like Paul, Silas, the disciples, and even Jesus all participated in singing as recorded in the New Testament. Although not directly musical, Daniel Block reminds the reader of Jesus’s crucial role: “Jesus was the model teacher who not only taught these men [Pharisees, Sadducees] concerning the kingdom of God, but also taught his disciples how to pray—an important aspect of worship (Matt 6:5–15). The Gospels portray Jesus as working deliberately with his disciples, preparing them for leadership roles in the future.”<sup>15</sup> Although not a perfect comparison to today, the New Testament does set a precedent for pastoral leadership involved in worship-related tasks.

### **Early Church**

One of the earliest quotes about Christian music comes from the pagan historian Pliny who referred to Christians as “meeting habitually on fixed days before sunrise to sing together alternately (? Antiphonically) a hymn to Christus as God.”<sup>16</sup> Although Pliny does not specifically mention leaders in these Christian groups, Justin Martyr uses the term “president” to refer to the officiant in early church worship: “The president . . . sends up prayers and thanksgivings to the best of his ability.”<sup>17</sup> The Qumran community of the first century included worship patterns of prayers, baptisms, and “songs to be sung at various occasions.”<sup>18</sup> This Jewish sect, contemporary with the birth of Christianity, obviously had leaders to facilitate music and other religious elements.

The first detailed worship order comes from Justin Martyr’s *First Apology* in

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<sup>15</sup> Daniel I. Block, *For the Glory of God: Recovering a Biblical Theology of Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 351–52.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Ernest Renan, *The History of the Origins of Christianity*, vol. 5, *The Gospels* (London: Mathieson and Company, 1890), 245.

<sup>17</sup> Justin Martyr, *The First Apology of Justin, the Martyr*, trans. Edward Rochie Hardy, in *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 287.

<sup>18</sup> Shields and Butzu, *Generations of Praise*, 30.

which he describes a typical worship service as including two major components: “*The Service of the Word* (The Christian Synagogue), and *The Service of the Lord’s Supper* (The Continuing Upper Room). . . . Music is not mentioned but we have no reason to believe that the service did not contain psalms and hymns (biblical and extra-biblical worship music) and possibly ecstatic ‘spiritual songs.’<sup>19</sup> In the third century, Hippolytus of Rome records that each Christian leader is encouraged to “pray according to his ability.”<sup>20</sup> This leadership of prayer also connects to the modern role of worship pastor.

## Medieval

Before the invention of the printing press, few Christians had their own copy of the Bible. The medieval realities of ecclesial power, layperson illiteracy, lack of Scripture among the peasant population, and services in non-vernacular Latin created the soil needed to produce priest-dominated faith.<sup>21</sup> Hustad writes,

More and more of the activity (including the singing) was given to the clergy, partly to control the occasional outcroppings of heretical hymns. Further, when church bishops became the new nobility of the empire, they adopted the symbolism of the state which was now available to them because of their power and wealth. . . . Increasingly, church leaders developed their theology and liturgical practice according to Old Testament traditions, . . . this led to serious departures from first-century worship customs. . . . The worship leader eventually became a priest, who, according to Western understanding , repeatedly offered the sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ for forgiveness of sins and for identification with Christ in salvation.<sup>22</sup>

In this quote, Hustad underscores the theological drift and leadership abuses that happened in the early centuries after the age of the church fathers.

Musical forms showcase this leader-led style of worship. Music historians J. Peter Burkholder and Claude Palisca record that official Vatican editions of Gregorian

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<sup>19</sup> Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 160, original italics.

<sup>20</sup> Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 161.

<sup>21</sup> See Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 184–86.

<sup>22</sup> Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 165.

chant, prepared by monks at the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes, were “begun by the choir leader, the *cantor*” and later joined by the rest of the choir.<sup>23</sup> In the later Middle Ages as the Mass form developed, the “entrance psalm” was “sung responsorially, alternating between a soloist and the choir. The cantor sings the opening, and the choir completes the antiphon.”<sup>24</sup> Interestingly, “the Gloria and the Credo are unusual among the chants sung by the choir in that they are begun by the priest officiating at the Mass rather than by the cantor.”<sup>25</sup> These summaries represent a shift taking place in musical leadership. From the Old Testament king/priest/musician leader in David, to the New Testament shared leadership house church model of the apostles, to the formalized state religion under Rome and the reintroduction of choirs and priest-musicians; the antecedents of today’s music pastors weave through history.

## **Reformation**

In the sixteenth century, the main three Protestant reformers, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli, sought to correct the clerical and theological abuses of the previous thousand years. These reformations also influenced music. Zwingli did not approve of congregational singing, Calvin restricted singing to the Psalms, and Luther

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<sup>23</sup> J. Peter Burkholder and Claude V. Palisca, eds., *Norton Anthology of Western Music: Ancient to Baroque* (New York: W W Norton, 2005), 8, original italics.

<sup>24</sup> Burkholder and Palisca, *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Burkholder and Palisca, *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, 14.

encouraged modern songs as well as the use of instruments.<sup>26</sup> Of all the reformers, Luther was the most supportive of creative music ministry: “For most of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, most Lutheran worship . . . was led by a ‘cantor’; that title (‘singer’) also was given to the musical director in large churches (like J. S. Bach in Leipzig from 1723 to 1750) and is still used in Lutheran churches today.”<sup>27</sup> Although the reformers contributed to worship renewal, the dissenters contributed more directly to free church worship in their movement away from the Roman Mass and to simpler structure of preaching, prayer, Scripture reading, and congregational song—the direct antecedent ministry of modern worship pastors.<sup>28</sup>

Congregational singing in this era was still a disputed matter. For hundreds of years, congregants had relied on priests, cantors, and choirs for music but had not been given language or license to participate. Particular Baptist leader Benjamin Keach “led his church to vote in favor of regular congregational singing on January 1, 1691.”<sup>29</sup> The following account from the Baptist Church at Newport, Rhode Island in 1728 showcases

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<sup>26</sup> Shields and Butzu write:

[Zwingli] decided that even congregational singing detracted from the reception of the preached word, and so he developed a service with no music. . . Luther, on the other hand, loved music and early in his reforming activities began to write praise words and compose (or borrow) music to which to sing them. . . Calvin followed Luther’s lead here, although he preferred to limit congregational singing to the psalms translated into metrical French. Shields and Butzu, *Generations of Praise*, 256.

Westermeyer poetically summarizes: “Luther recovered the congregation’s singing, Zwingli denied it, and Calvin restricted it, in ways that are in some sense parallel to Ambrose, Pambo, and Augustine.” Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 141.

Luther’s introduction of congregational hymns “in the vernacular became known as *chorales* (from the German word for ‘chant’), which gave the people in the pews a role in the music of church services.” Burkholder and Palisca, *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, 226.

<sup>27</sup> Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 188.

<sup>28</sup> Consider the following two Reformation-era service orders. First, the Lutheran *Formula Missae* (1523) showcased mass-like structure including: Introit, *Kyrie eleison*, *Gloria in excelsis Deo*, Collect, Epistle, Gradual and Alleluia, Gospel, Nicene Creed, Sermon, Preparation of elements, Salutation, Preface, Words of Institution, *Sanctus and Benedictus*, Lord’s Prayer, The Peace (with Confession), Communion (with *Agnus Dei*, and Communion Hymn), Collect, and Benediction. Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 187–88. Second, seventeenth-century Puritans in Boston followed a simplified order not unlike free church worship today: Opening prayer, reading and exposition of a chapter of the Bible, psalm singing, sermon, psalm singing, prayer, blessing. R. Scott Connell, *Baptists and Worship: Sitting beneath the Gospel’s Joyful Sound* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2020), 44–45.

<sup>29</sup> Connell, *Baptists and Worship*, 34.

a lack of congregational musical literacy and skill and the need for vocal leadership:

The singing in public worship of that time was wonderful in its variety and lack of harmony. . . . The Psalms, distorted into something which was strangely supposed to be meter, were sung. . . . Sometimes, when the psalm was long, the singing would occupy a half-hour, during which the congregation stood, and each one sang a tune which seemed to have little connection with the tune of any other singer. The result was a singular babel of sounds in which harmony was not the most noticeable feature.<sup>30</sup>

Slowly but surely, congregational song grew in the free church tradition in Europe and the Americas, including the use of newly written hymns.<sup>31</sup> As believers again learned to sing, the need for worship leaders and ultimately musical pastors re-emerged.

### **Revivals and Awakenings**

One of the early revival musicians was Isaac Watts, labeled the “Father of English Hymnody.”<sup>32</sup> He was a prolific songwriter whose most famous collection, published in 1707, was *Hymns and Spiritual Songs*. Another work, introduced in 1719, tied the Old Testament with the New and was titled *The Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament and Applied to the Christian State and Worship*. Christopher Ellis writes, “The title of this later work demonstrates that Watts was concerned with far more than improving the quality of the poetry sung in worship. He was a pastor and a theologian, anxious that the congregation should not be invited to sing inappropriate words.”<sup>33</sup> Watts logically connected the role of pastor with musician. Westermeyer summarizes, “Worship includes preaching, prayer, and song. Ministers are to acquire the gifts of preaching and praying. Why then, asked Watts, should not

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<sup>30</sup> Connell, *Baptists and Worship*, 45–46.

<sup>31</sup> Connell, *Baptists and Worship*, 47.

<sup>32</sup> Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 202.

<sup>33</sup> Christopher J. Ellis, *Gathering: A Spirituality and Theology of Worship in Free Church Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2004), 156.

Christians cultivate the capacity to compose spiritual songs as well?”<sup>34</sup> This freedom in sacred music not only influenced Christianity in Europe but the New World as well.

John Witvliet writes,

The traditional patterns of worship inherited from Europe—Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Anabaptist—continued in America, especially in ethnically cohesive communities. But alongside these established patterns blossomed what would soon become a dominant and influential pattern variously known as anti-liturgical, free-church, low-church, revivalistic, or frontier worship.<sup>35</sup>

Musically, “revivals left an unmistakable mark on regular corporate worship in many ecclesiastical traditions. Evangelical preaching, popular music, and spontaneous prayer became the hallmarks of worship in countless American congregations.”<sup>36</sup> Musical leaders rose to the challenge of this new style of worship with less solemn congregational music, more fast and happy singing, and the introduction of choirs.<sup>37</sup>

The Wesleys (preacher John and hymnist Charles) and Great Awakening catalysts Jonathan Edwards and George Whitefield forever revolutionized the church (Anglican, reformed, and free church streams).<sup>38</sup> In his hymn books, Charles Wesley included directions about singing together “lustily, modestly, in time with the leaders, not too slow, and spiritually.”<sup>39</sup> In the decades that followed, the dominant descriptor of revival leaders and evangelists became “pragmatic,” Charles Finney being the figurehead of this philosophy.<sup>40</sup> In the nineteenth century, revival worship became the

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<sup>34</sup> Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 204.

<sup>35</sup> John D. Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding: Windows into Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 166.

<sup>36</sup> Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 167.

<sup>37</sup> Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 167–88.

<sup>38</sup> Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 205.

<sup>39</sup> Martin V. Clarke, “John Wesley’s ‘Directions for Singing’: Methodist Hymnody as an Expression of Methodist Beliefs in Thought and Practice,” *Methodist History* 47, no. 4 (July 2009): 196–97, <https://archives.gcah.org/bitstream/handle/10516/207/Methodist-History-07-2009-Clarke.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Pragmatism here meaning “the best way you can.” Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 165.

methodological norm in most North American free churches.<sup>41</sup> Methodist circuit rider preacher John A. Grande once said, “I would sing a song or pray or exhort a few minutes, then the fire would break out among the people and the slain of the Lord everywhere were many.”<sup>42</sup> Crowds followed Grande from one preaching point to another, “singing and shouting along the way.”<sup>43</sup> Notice that Grande the preacher was in some ways Grande the worship leader.

Later revivalists Dwight L. Moody with soloist/song-leader Ira D. Sankey, Billy Sunday with Homer Rodeheaver, and Billy Graham with Cliff Barrows and George Beverly Shae model the close relationship between preaching and music, pastor and music leader, and even preacher *as* music leader for modern worship pastors.<sup>44</sup>

Another modernization in worship came in the form of the controversial organ. Into a context of mainly acapella singing, the first organ used in a North American church was installed in Quebec in 1661.<sup>45</sup> As organs appeared in larger churches, the need for paid organists grew—another antecedent of modern worship pastors.

The African American heritage also showcases early forms of worship leadership. Westermeyer explains, “In their sermons, African American preachers pushed speech to an elevated chant-like state that called forth responses by the congregation.”<sup>46</sup> Musicians and pastors used a “lining out” procedure for teaching and leading congregational song.<sup>47</sup> In this time period, singing schools helped educate in music

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<sup>41</sup> Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 179–80.

<sup>42</sup> Elmer L. Towns and Douglas Porter, *The Ten Greatest Revivals Ever: From Pentecost to the Present* (Ventura, CA: Vine Books, 2000), 79.

<sup>43</sup> Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 147.

<sup>44</sup> See Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 234; Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 182–88; Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 269.

<sup>45</sup> Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 257.

<sup>46</sup> Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 261.

<sup>47</sup> Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 280.



literacy and vocal skill, and also provided instruction for worship leadership.<sup>48</sup> The evangelist/revivalist musical minister provides another historical antecedent for the modern role of worship pastor.

### **Modern Times**

Lester Ruth and Lim Swee Hong write, “To be contemporary is to be with (con-) the time (tempus). As applied to worship, to be with the time (con-tempus, or contemporary) has meant not only to be of the time but to belong to the people of that time.”<sup>49</sup> The past one hundred years have showcased music leaders from contemporary Christian culture. George Beverly Shae modeled the role of *soloist/song-leader*.<sup>50</sup> This brand of hand-waving leader directs a congregation similar to a choral conductor. The church organ strengthened in popularity through the two world wars. Many churches, especially in mainline or liturgical churches, hired musicians to play organ. These *organist/leaders* would rarely lead vocally alone but would lead corporate singing from the instrument.<sup>51</sup>

The *singer/songwriter* introduced yet another antecedent to the role of worship pastor. Musicians like Keith Green, Michael W. Smith, Chris Tomlin, Twila Paris, Andraé Crouch, and Matt Redman demonstrated worship leadership by writing and corporately leading their own songs.<sup>52</sup> Technology brought creativity to the forefront of worship leadership. Radio, television, the recording studio, and the internet created the need for

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<sup>48</sup> Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 126.

<sup>49</sup> Lester Ruth and Swee-Hong Lim, *Lovin' on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017), 31.

<sup>50</sup> Towns and Whaley, *Worship Through the Ages*, 284.

<sup>51</sup> Robert H. Mitchell, *Ministry and Music* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), 65.

<sup>52</sup> See Swee-Hong Lim and Lester Ruth, *Lovin' on Jesus: A Concise History of Contemporary Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017), chap. 5.

*technological leaders*.<sup>53</sup> Westermeyer warns that technology (specifically digitized and manipulated sound reinforcement) can sometimes do more harm than good:

“Congregational song and church musicians face the dilemma of creatively using all the sounds that lay before them without silencing the people and without denying them their part in the learning curve.”<sup>54</sup> Notwithstanding ongoing debates regarding the appropriate use of creative technology in corporate worship, today’s worship pastors serve with high technological demands.

The megachurch movement introduced a powerful, but possibly negative, aspect of music leadership in the twenty-first century—the *celebrity worship leader*. Churches like Hillsong, Elevation, Gateway, and Bethel produced superstar talent in people like Darlene Zschech, Ruben Morgan, Jeremy Riddle, Cory Asbury, and Kari Jobe.<sup>55</sup> Modern worship pastors must serve in humility despite the temptations of the platform and spotlight. Finally, significant worship influence has come from what Matthew Westerholm calls “*the collective invasion*.”<sup>56</sup> Groups like People & Songs, Maverick City, and We the Kingdom approach ministry from a group mindset and demonstrate a team leadership model that modern worship pastors can emulate.

The history of Christianity from Old Testament times to the present has given modern music directors antecedents to their own roles today. The following section looks at one crucial aspect of the ministry of worship pastors—gospel-centered witness.

### **Worship Pastors as Gospel Proclaimers**

As churches in the post-modern era move from traditional forms of music,

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<sup>53</sup> Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 271–72, 297.

<sup>54</sup> Westermeyer, *Te Deum*, 303.

<sup>55</sup> Lim and Ruth, *Lovin’ on Jesus*, 69, 77.

<sup>56</sup> Matthew D. Westerholm, “Theology & History of Worship, Handout #3” unpublished class notes for 80841 (The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, January 7, 2021), 9, italics mine.

supported by piano and organ, to modern worship styles, replete with guitars, drums, and synthesizers, the demand for guitar-playing leaders increases. Churches are often desperate for musical help and are tempted to hire the first talented artist who comes along.<sup>57</sup> Block shares a concern that sometimes “ministers of music are hired for their musical skill, achievements, creativity, or enthusiasm on stage, without sufficient concern for their knowledge of Scripture, their orthodoxy, or their theology of worship.”<sup>58</sup> There is a seriousness to a church musician’s calling. Worship pastors are not simply church musicians, they are tasked with broadcasting the gospel. Music pastors proclaim the gospel in three ways—in the songs they choose and lead, in the words they say from the platform, and by facilitating the preaching ministry of the church.

First, worship pastors proclaim the gospel in the songs they choose and lead.

David Lemley writes historically:

Early Christian musical practice was the integration of people into the story of God’s saving acts as centered in Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. . . . Each person, of any age or gender, Jew or Gentile, contributing their voice in song (1 Cor 14:26; Col 3:16) was the sign of the impending New Age. The ‘one voice’ of the congregation established their unique belonging to one another, and their commission to be ministers of the gospel.<sup>59</sup>

Constance Cherry writes, similarly, that Christians sing the story of God: “Worship is primarily a proclamation of the whole story of who God is and what God has done

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<sup>57</sup> Many years ago, I mentored a musically talented and spiritually passionate student for two summers at our church. He was young, just finishing high school and had not yet gone to college. Before he completed his second summer internship with me, a church approached him seeking to hire him as worship pastor. I pled with this young man and the church’s pastor not to proceed. I encouraged the eager student to go to Bible college and gain more maturity before accepting the call to a church. I encouraged the eager pastor to look for an older, more experienced musical leader. Unfortunately, my wise counsel was not heeded. The young man was hired and within months, broke under the pressure of ministry. His employment was terminated, and he has been out of the ministry to this day. This tragic story is filled with deep regret.

<sup>58</sup> Block, *For the Glory of God*, 236.

<sup>59</sup> David Lemley, *Becoming What We Sing: Formation through Contemporary Worship Music* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 64.

through his mighty acts of salvation through history.”<sup>60</sup> The pinnacle of God’s salvific story is, of course, the gospel of Christ—the very thing worship pastors proclaim through congregational song.

Theological faithfulness limits a worship pastor’s “power” on this point. A musical leader cannot bring the presence of God to bear in a congregational setting in some mystical way. When God’s people are present, he is present (Matt 18:20). Lemley, in error or at least overstatement, claims conversely that “there are, in contemporary musical practice and even in the broad category of popular music, models for musicking that can make the church more present to the risen Christ in the sounds of worship.”<sup>61</sup> Just as a leader does not have the power to “bring Christ down” upon a gathered people, their music does not have the power to “bring people up” before God. Greg Brewton agrees: “When we expect our music to ‘usher us into the presence of God,’ we attempt to make music the mediator. . . . The only person capable of bringing us into God’s presence is his Son, Jesus, and for believers he has already done this (Eph 2:4–7; Heb 10:19–23; 12:22–24).”<sup>62</sup> The relationship between Christ and his Bride rests solely in the perfect power of the gospel. This is the ministry of worship pastors: to proclaim the gospel, specifically through music.

Kevin Navarro writes, “Part of becoming a complete worship leader is keeping in mind that redemption is the heart of our songs. . . . Are we proclaiming the gospel in our songs? This is important.”<sup>63</sup> Redemption is the core blessing of the gospel in that guilty sinners are redeemed from the punishment of death through faith in Christ and his

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<sup>60</sup> Constance M. Cherry, *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 153.

<sup>61</sup> Lemley, *Becoming What We Sing*, 204.

<sup>62</sup> Gregory B. Brewton, *A Guide to Worship Ministry: The Worship Minister’s Life and Work* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2018), 76.

<sup>63</sup> Kevin J. Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 41, 68.

finished work (Rom 6:23). Brewton cautions worship pastors, “You only have a certain number of minutes in the service to sing gospel truths; why spend time singing songs that are ambiguous? . . . Discover worship songs that communicate the gospel well.”<sup>64</sup> In a similar vein, Bryan Chappell writes of the liturgy of the good news: “We tell the gospel by the way we worship.”<sup>65</sup> A worship pastor’s role is to proclaim the gospel through music.

There are many quality worship songs to choose from. One such song, filled with gospel truths, was written in 2001 by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend. “In Christ Alone” first appeared in CCLI Canada’s Top 25 List in October of 2004 and has remained on this list ever since.<sup>66</sup> After eighteen years, at the time of writing this chapter, “In Christ Alone” still holds the fifteenth spot in CCLI Canada’s list. There is a durability to gospel-rich words such as Getty and Townend’s second verse:

In Christ alone who took on flesh  
Fullness of God in helpless babe  
This gift of love and righteousness  
Scorned by the ones He came to save  
Till on that cross as Jesus died  
The wrath of God was satisfied  
For every sin on Him was laid  
Here in the death of Christ I live<sup>67</sup>

Worship pastors have the privilege of using the songs they choose and lead to proclaim the gospel that Christ lived, died, was buried, and rose again to secure eternal life for all who repent of their sin and put their faith in him.

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<sup>64</sup> Brewton, *A Guide to Worship Ministry*, 80.

<sup>65</sup> Bryan Chappell, *Christ-Centered Worship: Letting the Gospel Shape Our Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 19.

<sup>66</sup> Find “In Christ Alone” at SongSelect by CCLI (Christian Copyright Licensing International). SongSelect by CCLI, “Top Worship Songs of the 2020s,” accessed October 6, 2023, [https://songselect.ccli.com/search/results?list=topdecade\\_2020](https://songselect.ccli.com/search/results?list=topdecade_2020).

<sup>67</sup> Keith Getty and Stuart Townend, “In Christ Alone,” Song Lyric (Thankyou Music [Admin. by Capitol CMG Publishing], 2001).

Second, worship pastors proclaim the gospel in the words they say from the platform. Preaching is not the only way the gospel is communicated on Sunday mornings. Another form of gospel-speak is in transitional words worship pastors utilize to create service flow. Brewton writes, “Worship leaders need to be clear as they speak in the service, not allowing time to be spent on topics that are unrelated to the truths of Scripture.”<sup>68</sup> These truths must be gospel laden. Notice the gospel-related content in the following recommendation by Zac Hicks: “Instead of just asking people to stand in worship, we might say, ‘Weekly worship is a celebration of Christ’s resurrection, and so we stand to sing and praise as a visible sign that Christ has risen and we will one day rise with him!’”<sup>69</sup> This is a great example of gospel wording from a worship pastor.

Debra Rienstra and Ron Rienstra write that “worshippers ought to see and experience God through the words and actions of worship leaders.”<sup>70</sup> These authors comment on the challenge worship leaders have with authenticity. Some congregants might equate formal, planned verbal transitions or prayers as inauthentic or fake. Others might view these words as professional, befitting the solemnity of worship before the throne of God. On the other hand, some congregants might equate spontaneous verbiage as sloppy, not in accordance with solid doctrine. Others might view these words as a sign of leader authenticity, as “from the heart” where nothing is scripted. The issue of authenticity is slippery because of the subjective nature of perception.<sup>71</sup> So, how should musical leaders approach the comments they share from the platform?

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<sup>68</sup> Brewton, *A Guide to Worship Ministry*, 74.

<sup>69</sup> Zac M. Hicks, *The Worship Pastor: A Call to Ministry for Worship Leaders and Teams* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 180–81.

<sup>70</sup> Debra Rienstra and Ron Rienstra, *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 96.

<sup>71</sup> To this, Rienstra and Rienstra add: “We have to be authentic to who we are, each congregation with its own history and culture context. However, who we are must be continually reshaped by God’s vision of who we are *becoming*.” Rienstra and Rienstra, *Worship Words*, 112. This “godly vision” is centered in the gospel and Christ’s transformative work among a people (Rom 12:1–2).

Kendra Hotz and Matthew Mathews give a helpful reminder to music pastors of posturing worship comments squarely in the gospel: “The language of worship generates a world of meaning grounded in the revelation of the gospel and draws us into this new world where our religious affections are trained properly, thereby moving us from the fragmentation of humanity’s fall to the new wholeness and integrity made available through the incarnation.”<sup>72</sup> This rather thick definition should inspire worship pastors to fill their transitional words with the power and credibility of the gospel.

Allen Ross writes that sound biblical proclamation should inform all worshipful acts. He contends that without solid doctrine, both spoken and sung, corporate worship becomes empty, even meaningless.<sup>73</sup> The comments a pastor makes within the flow of a service are surprisingly crucial to the depth and expression of worship that a congregation experiences. Gospel words are an essential part of a worship pastor’s calling.

Third, worship pastors proclaim the gospel by facilitating the preaching ministry of the church. The lead pastor of a church is the chief under-shepherd of a local congregation. This leader likely has the primary role of preaching the gospel. The role of a worship pastor is not one of preaching but one of facilitating the sharing of God’s Word. Romans 10:14 is applicable here: “How can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” Worship pastors facilitate the planning of services with the goal of communicating the gospel.

For some worship pastors, the drive toward leadership causes them to react against the goals and desires of their lead pastor. However, Mike Bonem and Roger

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<sup>72</sup> Kendra G. Hotz and Matthew T. Mathews, *Shaping the Christian Life: Worship and the Religious Affections* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 70–71.

<sup>73</sup> Ross states, “Worship becomes empty ritual and the faith itself obscure. The proper words of worship must be on the lips of the worshippers as they come into the presence of the Lord.” Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 505–6.

Patterson remind associate staff that leading from the second chair requires contentment and partnership: “The senior pastor is sensing God’s direction, painting the verbal pictures, and catalyzing the congregation, while the second chair is looking through the details of the facts, figures, personnel, finance, and ministry programs to ensure that the vision is actually being accomplished.”<sup>74</sup> The connection to music ministry is clear. Just as the lead pastor (first chair) is called by God to “preach the Word” (2 Tim 4:2), the worship pastor (second chair) is called by God to care for the details undergirding the communication of the gospel. Music pastors ought to take great encouragement from the fact that even though their title might be “second chair,” their ministry is by no means secondary.

Lemley writes historically about preaching in the early church:

In the New Testament, preaching moved hearers to clarity about the life into which their own would be transformed, and their access to the Spirit as a means of integrating their story with God’s story. The ministry of preaching, teaching, and proclamation of the word for the early church meant the announcement of Jesus crucified, buried, and raised by God to bring about the age of the Spirit for God’s people.<sup>75</sup>

Marva Dawn observes, “Those who preach especially need devotional materials to take them away from their customary analytical work with the Scriptures and into the presence of God. For me that requires ‘right-brain’ tools such as singing, stories, and art.”<sup>76</sup> Dawn distinguishes between studying the Bible and actually meeting the God who is seen within its pages. There is a difference. We can read the Bible to understand doctrine, or we can read to meet Jesus. Methodologically, Dawn is correct in reminding worship pastors of their significant role in bringing creativity to bear in ministry. This kind of activity heightens the emotional and affectional components of our faith. This

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<sup>74</sup> Mike Bonem and Roger Patterson, *Leading from the Second Chair: Serving Your Church, Fulfilling Your Role, and Realizing Your Dreams* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 146.

<sup>75</sup> Lemley, *Becoming What We Sing*, 38.

<sup>76</sup> Marva J. Dawn, *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for This Urgent Time* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 220.



ministry of music directors can bring a healthy balance to the often intellectual or cerebral preaching ministry of lead pastors. In this way, artistic ministry enhances and supports the preaching, and reception, of God's Word.

Above all, the ministry of the worship pastor must be gospel infused. The proclamation of the gospel occurs through the songs a worship pastor selects and leads, by the transitional words he speaks during corporate gatherings, and how his ministry facilitates the preaching of God's Word.

### **Worship Leading Is a Spiritual Ministry with Pastoral Connections**

Worship leaders and pastors are nearly always musicians, however, the role of musical leadership in today's churches involves much more than notes and rhythms or melodies and chord patterns. Hicks connects musical and pastoral leadership by counseling that every pastor should consider worship leadership part of their job, and every worship leader should view their role as pastoral.<sup>77</sup> Music pastors are called to embrace much more than simply musicianship.

In the Old Testament, those who served in worship duties were Spirit-filled for their spiritual ministry: "Oholiab, for instance, was by natural ability 'a craftsman and designer, and an embroiderer' (Exod 38:23). But for working on the tabernacle, God 'filled him' (and Bezalel and other craftsmen] with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability, and knowledge in all kinds of crafts (31:3; 35:31)."<sup>78</sup> Based on observations from 2 Chronicles 30, Peter Leithart writes, "Musical ministry should not be handed over to

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<sup>77</sup> Hicks writes: "You [worship leader] may not have that heading [pastor] on your business card or online profile, but that doesn't change the fact that your work is inherently pastoral. You are a pastor." Hicks, *The Worship Pastor*, 14. Hicks sets a high bar of expectation for worship pastors in assigning sixteen roles including: church lover, corporate mystic, doxological philosopher, disciple maker, prayer leader, theological dietician, war general, watchful prophet, missionary, artist chaplain, caregiver, mortician, emotional shepherd, liturgical architect, curator, and tour guide. Hicks, *The Worship Pastor*, Table of Contents.

<sup>78</sup> Roy Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 62.

whichever church member who can plunk out a few chords on the piano. It should be instead seen as a ministerial office, reserved for those with theological training, spiritual maturity, and ‘good understanding of Yahweh.’”<sup>79</sup> The modern movement from the title “music director” to “worship pastor” is a good one in that it heightens the pastoral nature of the role.

Block adds to the discussion by deepening the role of worship leadership to encompass much of what traditionally is assigned to lead pastors.<sup>80</sup> Block equates modern worship leaders with the New Testament label “Servant of Christ” (*doulos Christou*, Rom 1:1) whose role was one of servant/slave to Christ. In this way, Block equates a worship pastor’s responsibility with Paul’s indenture to Christ: “[Worship leaders’] responsibility is primarily to God, not to the audience. They serve as his mouthpieces, ministry with his authority, and embody his covenant righteousness. ‘Servants of YHWH’ serve the Lord by caring for his flock (John 21:16–17) his way (1 Pet 5:2).”<sup>81</sup> Leithart and Block show that both Testaments model pastoral functions of music leaders.

Bob Kauflin reminds worship leaders of their pastoral calling: “People in your church will learn the most from what is modeled by you and the other leaders.”<sup>82</sup> He connects pastoral care with leadership in music in an almost symbiotic relationship. Kauflin further states, “The church doesn’t need leaders who love to lead people in worship but don’t love the people they’re serving.” In other words, worship pastors will

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<sup>79</sup> Peter J. Leithart, *From Silence to Song: The Davidic Liturgical Revolution* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), Chap. 6, Sec. 7. Kindle.

<sup>80</sup> Block writes, “In the New Testament, regardless of the person’s office, leadership in worship . . . involves practical ministry: teaching, encouraging the saints, guarding the flock, caring for the needed, and so forth.” Block, *For the Glory of God*, 359.

<sup>81</sup> Block, *For the Glory of God*, 356.

<sup>82</sup> Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 173.

only be effective in so much as they care for the people they lead and serve with.<sup>83</sup>

Musical leadership in the church must be pastoral.

Witvliet summarizes the roles of worship leaders according to four broad categories: craftspeople, directors and coordinators, performers, and spiritual engineers. He admits each of these roles are insufficient to the calling of a modern worship director. Rather, “we need to see planning and leading worship as pastoral tasks. . . . They [worship leaders] are people with a pastoral heart. They know the names, faces, and stories of people in the congregation. . . . They are able to shepherd others because they constantly pray for them.”<sup>84</sup> Now more than ever, worship directors must embrace the pastoral connections in their role.

### **Enlisting and Mentoring the Next Generation of Worship Leaders**

Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington write in a general way regarding the disciple-making role of every pastor: “A pastor needs to continually remind and encourage his leaders to stay the course, to keep making disciples who make other disciples.”<sup>85</sup> All believers, including pastors, are called to reproduce themselves, to make disciples.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Kauflin, *Worship Matters*, 216.

<sup>84</sup> Witvliet, *Worship Seeking Understanding*, 280–81, 284.

<sup>85</sup> Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington, *Discipleshift: Five Steps that Help Your Church to Make Disciples Who Make Disciples* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 129–30.

<sup>86</sup> In his DMin thesis, Byron Spradlin adds helpful insight as he expounds on Matthew 28:19: “It is important to understand that the main command is a present, active command. It is best translated as “be making disciples continually.” The clear biblical priority of discipleship is something one does at every stage and turn in ministry.” Byron L. Spradlin, “Discipling Worship Leadership: Biblical and Theological Rationale for Discipling Worship Leaders” (DMin Thesis, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2012), 98. Spradlin adds instruction for musical disciplers: “It is important for those who are discipling worship leaders to realize that those being disciplined should evidence the character of Christ in their daily walk. It is seen in how the artist interacts with others, develops relationships, and partners with other musicians in genuine ministry.” Spradlin, “Discipling Worship Leadership,” 104. Ultimately, Spradlin hopes (his wording) that current church worship leadership will better understand the priority of more intentionally discipling their own. Spradlin, “Discipling Worship Leadership,” 107. Worship pastors need to pour into the next generation of music leadership.

Disciple-making delves not only into the spiritual disciplines, but also into practical aspects of ministry. Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Did Paul refer to following his teaching on Christian freedom from 1 Corinthians 10 or on instructions for corporate worship from chapter 11? As his command “follow my example” comes in between these two chapters, it is conceivable that Paul wants the Corinthian believers to imitate him in all these issues. So, Jim Putman writes practically, “When done right, discipleship will produce the leaders every church needs to succeed.”<sup>87</sup> Logically, if each church needs leaders of worship, worship pastors must take seriously their role in seeking, equipping, and discipling future worship leaders.

Aaron Keyes relates a time when he was deeply burdened to help train up the next generation of worship leadership. He writes, “God was stirring in me a desire to train and equip an army of worship leaders armed with God’s Word and a servant’s heart.”<sup>88</sup> For Keyes, there is one word to summarize enlisting and mentoring worship leadership: discipleship. “If we begin to see ourselves as disciple-makers, then our definition of success changes drastically. We’ll have to *create space in our schedules, living rooms, and hearts to allow our lives to intertwine.*”<sup>89</sup> Church staff members who oversee music should not be concerned just with key signatures, sheet music, and instruments. Rather, they need to be disciple-makers. Keyes reminds the reader that “the Great Commission is just as applicable for worship leaders as it is for missionaries and pastors. It’s very clear: make disciples wherever you go!”<sup>90</sup> Keyes is right. Worship

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<sup>87</sup> Jim Putman, *Read-Life Discipleship: Building Churches that Make Disciples* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2010), 19.

<sup>88</sup> Aaron Keyes, “The Worship Leader and Disciple-Making,” in *Doxology & Theology: How the Gospel Forms the Worship Leader*, ed. Matt Boswell (Nashville: B & H, 2013), 131.

<sup>89</sup> Keyes, “The Worship Leader and Disciple-Making,” 135, emphasis original.

<sup>90</sup> Keyes, “The Worship Leader and Disciple-Making,” 137.

pastors are called to enlist and train the next generation of worship leaders. This is discipleship in the trenches of worship ministry.

In his PhD dissertation on worship leader job descriptions, Ken Boer writes, “Worship leaders are also encouraged to mentor future leaders.” He references Rich Kirkpatrick, Aaron Keyes, Jamie Harvill, and Greg Sheer who have each labored in teaching worship leaders to mentor other potential leaders.<sup>91</sup> Greg Sheer writes of mentoring younger musicians, of helping others foster and grow their gifts in music in such a way that the next generation of pianists, guitarists, drummers, and vocalists are nurtured not just used.<sup>92</sup> Michael Bauer, in his book *Arts Ministry*, discusses ways in which the arts nurture the creative life of God’s people. Those who lead in this field, whom Bauer labels “Arts Ministers,” have a responsibility to foster God’s intended purposes in others.<sup>93</sup>

Navarro testifies that he needs qualified people to help lead: “Skill and leadership training is a must, whether it is studying a book together, going to conferences, hosting workshops, or taking time out in rehearsals to teach. This kind of training will allow you to continue to grow as a worship community.”<sup>94</sup> Worship pastors are given the

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<sup>91</sup> Kenneth Alan Boer, “A Comparative Content Analysis of Worship Leader Job Descriptions and Undergraduate Worship Leader Curricula in the Southern Baptist Convention” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019), 71.

<sup>92</sup> Greg Sheer, *The Art of Worship: A Musician’s Guide to Leading Modern Worship* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006), 35. Sheer recounts his role in forming worship teams at Northwestern College. At the beginning of the year, Sheer takes a directive role in helping the new student musicians to become grounded and established. He shares his method of leadership multiplication: “Then, as I discovered each musician’s gifts, I handed over more and more leadership to the team members; by the end of the year, they led worship without my assistance.” Sheer, *The Art of Worship*, 35–56.

<sup>93</sup> Bauer writes, Arts ministers need to pay attention to the goal of human formation. They need to be reminded that art does not exist in the church simply to provide beautiful objects and experiences that will keep parishioners comfortable and secure. Indeed, it will often do the reverse. It has a way of comforting the disturbed and disturbing the comfortable. Art does this in order to assist God’s people as they attempt to live in the *Imago Dei* in which they were created and the *Imago Christi* into which they are being redeemed. It is a form of ministry. (Michael J. Bauer, *Arts Ministry: Nurturing the Creative Life of God’s People* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013], 98)

<sup>94</sup> Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader*, 170.

privilege of raising up successors.<sup>95</sup>

Rory Noland writes in terms of “nurturing artists” and longs for the day “when the greatest art is coming not out of the universities and such but out of the church.”<sup>96</sup> For Noland, leadership development includes nurturing the creative giftings in others. Hustad agrees that one of the principal tasks of a music minister is “the marshaling and developing of the musical talent in a church family.”<sup>97</sup> Hustad goes further saying, “I am convinced that the best music ministers consider themselves principally to be *music educators* who work in the context of the church. . . . The training aspect of church music continues at every age level.”<sup>98</sup> Noland and Hustad recognize the need of worship pastors to identify and equip the next generation of artists in the church. This leadership development includes worship leaders and a host of other artistry and tech-related roles—all within the context of discipleship.

### Conclusion

The role of worship pastor today requires much more than knowing how to play guitar and sing. There truly is a pastoral component to this role, as Block explains, “Regardless of the person’s office, leadership in worship rarely if ever involves primarily leading a worship service. Instead, it involves practical ministry: teaching, encouraging the saints, guarding the flock, caring for the needy, and so forth.”<sup>99</sup> Both Testaments and

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<sup>95</sup> Robert Craig, in his doctoral thesis helpfully adds: “As a worship leader, being called by God is certainly important. And there is much credence in the saying that ‘God doesn’t call the equipped, but he equips the called.’ However, there must be a better way to learn worship ministry leadership than trial and error. Mentorship from veteran worship leaders to novice worship leaders is a viable solution.” Robert Todd Craig, “Mentoring Worship Leaders to Become Mentoring Worship Leaders” (DWS thesis, Liberty University, 2020), 43.

<sup>96</sup> Rory Noland, *The Heart of the Artist: A Character-Building Guide for You and Your Ministry Team* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 253.

<sup>97</sup> Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 81.

<sup>98</sup> Hustad, *Jubilate II*, 80.

<sup>99</sup> Block, *For the Glory of God*, 359.

church history give antecedents for the modern role of worship pastor. A faithful music pastor proclaims the gospel through the songs they choose and lead, the transitional words they speak in a service, and by facilitating the preaching of the Word. These music staff members must embrace the calling of God to pastor those under their care and equip the next generation of worship leaders.

## CHAPTER 4

### DETAILS, DESCRIPTION, AND RESULTS OF THE PROJECT

Kevin Navarro writes that a complete worship leader must be a theologian, disciple, artist, and leader. In fact, “The worship leader who does not possess attributes from these four categories is at best impaired.”<sup>1</sup> With this in mind, I set out to explore these four characteristics among many of my Canadian worship director peers. After many months of writing the context, theological basis, and popular literature review for this study, it was exciting to finally proceed with implementation. The following chapter details the process and results of surveying and interviewing Canadian worship pastors to understand their ministry best practices.

#### **Preparation Period (Weeks 1–4)**

In the first month, I programmed the worship pastor survey as an online Google Form and then secured a fellow worship pastor to complete a peer review of its functionality and clarity.<sup>2</sup> Once suggested changes were made, I updated the survey and compiled a list of Canadian churches larger than six hundred in attendance.<sup>3</sup> I wrote a

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin J. Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 14.

<sup>2</sup> Jeff Kendrick, Pastor of Worship Ministries at Mission City Bible Church in Brantford, Ontario completed the feedback survey in the Spring of 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Assembling the list of larger churches required calling denominational offices to confirm church names and locations. Twenty-two denominations were consulted, including: (The) Acts 29 Network, Associated Gospel Churches of Canada, Baptist General Conference, Brethren in Christ, Canadian Atlantic Baptist Convention, Canadian Baptist of Atlantic Canada, Convention Baptist of Ontario and Quebec, Christian & Missionary Alliance, Canadian National Baptist Convention, Congregational Christian Churches in Canada, Evangelical Free Church of Canada, Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada, (The) Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada, (The) Great Commission Collective, Harvest Bible Chapel, Independent/Community Churches, (The) Meeting House, Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, North American Baptist Conference, (The) Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada, (The) Salvation Army, and (The) Wesleyan Church of Canada.



formal electronic letter of explanation, and emailed it to sixty-nine churches across the country, inviting their worship staff pastor or director to participate in the study. Of these sixty-nine churches, forty-two worship pastors agreed to complete the survey. This number was well over the minimum requirement of thirty pastors.

### **Implementation Period (Weeks 5–20)**

During the second month, I emailed the online survey link and instructions to the forty-two worship pastors who had agreed to participate. Within the first three weeks, I received back fifteen completed surveys. At this point, I sent a reminder to any leader who had not yet responded. The delay was expected as this period included the Christmas and New Year holiday weeks. While I waited for surveys to come in, I compiled a list of thirteen worship pastors from the original list of forty-two churches to participate in step two, namely Zoom or in-person interviews.

Although the third month saw eighteen surveys completed, a major shift in life and ministry pulled my focus away from schooling. During this time my family and I moved from Hamilton, Ontario, where I had pastored at West Highland Church for twenty-one years to Barrie, Ontario, where I was hired at Emmanuel Baptist Church. I continued to receive completed surveys but doctoral writing was largely paused.

During the fourth and fifth months, seven pastors completed surveys and nine interviews were conducted. In the final analysis, I received forty surveys out of the forty-two which were promised. One person declined to participate because of busyness and another church could not take part because it was found to be smaller than the required six hundred in attendance. The original proposed timeline included seven weeks for the surveys and interviews to be completed. This process actually required a full sixteen weeks.

Using the online survey resource Google Forms proved to be a good choice for two reasons. First, the design portal was easy to use and created a clean and professional-

looking survey that I was proud to distribute. Second, because “Forms” is part of the Google family of apps, the results were easily downloaded directly into spreadsheet format in Google Sheets.

Once in Sheets, I created two tables and twenty-four figures of the results. I copied and pasted the information from each Likert style question into an open section of the Sheets document and then converted the data into a chart or table. This process involved hours of trial and error as I experimented with various templates available, such as pie, line, bar, and area charts. Beyond these simple categories, there were also a myriad of formatting options at my disposal to ensure legibility and consistent design. I was also able to convert the results of some open-ended questions into graph form, such as “Figure 11. Influential Scripture verses for worship ministry” on page 98.

The only chart I created from scratch was the comparison between age and education level (p. 95). I could easily discover the percentage of worship pastors in each age demographic (Figure 6, p. 93). I could likewise ascertain education level percentages in the survey group (Figure 8, p. 95). However, I was interested to know if these two sets of data were related. Were those with lower education found at the younger levels? Were those with masters or doctoral degrees among the oldest pastors surveyed? Google Sheets was not able to convert this dual data into any kind of graph. After trying in vain to force this need, I decided to create my own chart. The only way to visualize this particular assessment was to use a drawing program to manually plot the age and education level of each of the forty respondents. Once all the tables and charts were created, I was able to analyze the results and interact with them in the research paper.

### **Follow-up Period (Weeks 21–27)**

During Weeks 21–22, I wrote detailed manuscripts of podcasts 1–3, including digital storyboards of graphics and video clips.

During Weeks 23–24, I wrote detailed manuscripts of podcasts 4–6, including

digital storyboards of graphics and video clips. Once done, I submitted the six completed podcast manuscripts/digital storyboards to a panel of three experts for their critique and feedback of the flow and content of the curriculum. This panel included Gary Sharp (a long-time worship pastor in several Ontario churches, current worship pastor at Journey Church in Fredericton, New Brunswick, and the founder of the Canadian Worship Pastors Facebook Group, a group with 515 members), Doug Thomson (head of the music and worship department at Heritage College & Seminary, Cambridge, Ontario), and David Barker (Professor of Old Testament at Heritage College & Seminary). This evaluation group fulfilled my goal of seeking feedback from a respected worship pastor, a college professor, and a theologian.<sup>4</sup>

During Weeks 25–27 I received feedback from the panel of experts and made changes as needed until 90 percent of all the rubric evaluation indicators met or exceeded the sufficiency level.<sup>5</sup>

### **Post-project Period (Weeks 28–36)**

*Note – this phase was not part of the scope of the project and was not evaluated within the project. This post-project period is listed here to show the logical steps required to complete the full vision.*

1. During Week 28, I will draft edit the video/graphic content for the 6 podcasts.
2. During Week 29, I will edit and produce podcasts 1 and 2.
3. During Week 30, I will edit and produce podcasts 3 and 4 and contact current/potential worship leaders in West Highland Church and Emmanuel Church, as well as the forty survey participants, to watch the podcast series starting the following week.
4. During Week 31, I will edit and produce podcasts 5 and 6. I will post Podcast 1 online.
5. During Week 32, I will post podcast 2 online, and produce a summary of the survey results and send them to all worship pastors who participated in the study.

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<sup>4</sup> See pages 14–15.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix 1 for the evaluation rubric used.

6. During Week 33, I will post podcast 3 online.
7. During Week 34, I will post podcast 4 online.
8. During Week 35, I will post podcast 5 online.
9. During Week 36, I will post podcast 6 online. Also, I will gather fellow Emmanuel Church worship leaders to join me in watching podcast 6, followed by a time of discussion and fellowship.

### **Survey and Interview Results**

I connected with peers across Canada, some of whom I have known and worked with and others who were brand new acquaintances. I greatly respect their willingness to participate as I know firsthand how easy it is to remain insular in one's own ministry context. The demands of local church involvement keep a worship pastor busy without the added expectation of partnering with pastors of other churches. This project gave voice to ideas and ministry practices which could easily have hidden within unique church settings. However, the Body of Christ, including its worship leadership, is always stronger as it works together. Kevin Navarro's *The Complete Worship Leader* provided the thematic structure for the data collection.

### **Demographics: Churches**

Before delving into respondent ministry best practices regarding Navarro's four categories of theology, discipleship, artistry, and leadership, it was important to understand the makeup of the churches consulted. Phone and internet research found twenty-two Canadian denominations/church associations that met the project requirements. From among these groups, I developed a list of eighty-three churches thought to be over six hundred in attendance.<sup>6</sup> Through more research involving consulting church website staff listings and phoning church offices, I secured the names

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<sup>6</sup> There were likely many more than eighty-three Canadian churches greater than six hundred in attendance. However, denominational statistics were either scant or not shared with me. Increasing the list beyond eighty-three churches would have required many more hours of research—far more than this project allowed.

and contact information for worship staff at sixty-nine churches. After sending between one and three emails to each of these worship pastors, the following were the groups and churches that participated in the study.

Table 1. Participating denominations/groups and numbers of churches

Denomination/Group	Number of Participating Churches
Acts 29 Network	1
Associated Gospel Church (AGC)	2
Baptist (Independent)	1
Canadian Atlantic Baptist Convention (CABC)	1
Canadian Baptists of Atlantic Canada (CBAC)	1
Christian & Missionary Alliance (C&MA)	9
Evangelical Free Church (EFC)	2
Evangelical Missionary Church of Canada (EMCC)	1
Fellowship of Evangelical Baptists Church of Canada (FEBCC)	9
Great Commission Collective (GCC)	5
Harvest	2
Independent	1
Mennonite Brethren (MB)	2
Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC)	1
The Meeting House (TMH)	1
Wesleyan	1
<b>Total: 14 denominations, 2 independents</b>	<b>40</b>



larger than six hundred and therefore were excluded from the study.

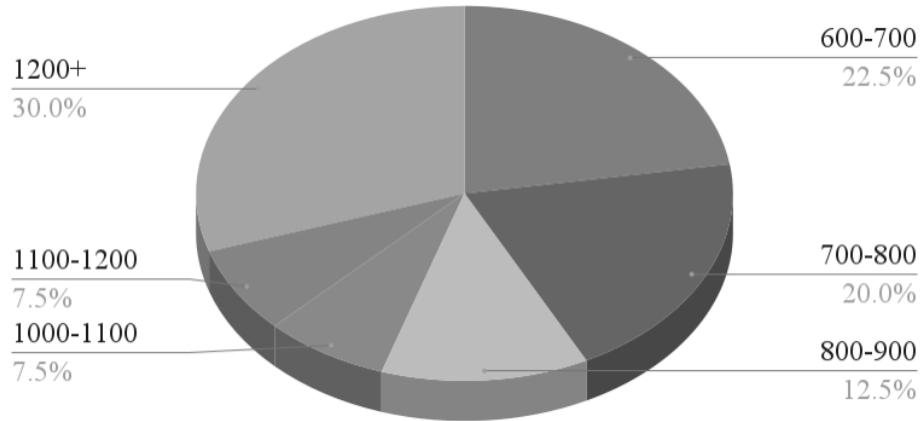


Figure 3. In-person church attendance demographics

The sample group divided fairly evenly into in-person attendance quadrants, with 22.5 percent of churches between 600–700, 20 percent of churches between 700–800, 27.5 percent of churches between 800–1200, and 30 percent of churches with over 1200 in attendance.

The following is the statistical data for online attendance (number of IP addresses). These numbers include all ages combined.

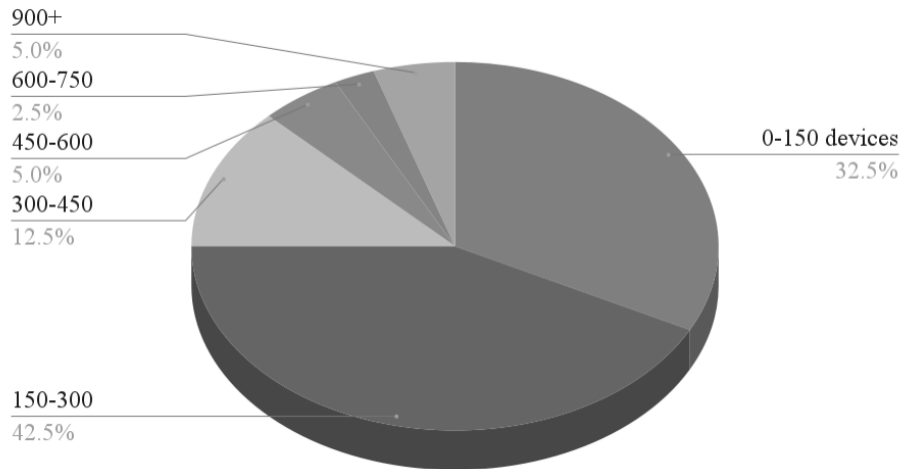


Figure 4. Online church device connections

One third of the data sample (thirteen churches) hosted up to 150 devices per week.<sup>7</sup> Twenty-two churches serviced between 150–450 IP addresses weekly. The top five churches hosted from 450 to more than 900 devices for online services. The cultural impact of Canada’s larger evangelical churches, through in-person and virtual attendance numbers, is significant. Canadian worship pastors are privileged with remarkable spiritual influence over thousands of Canadian households.

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<sup>7</sup> The number of IP addresses correspond to the number of devices connected to live stream services. These devices could be smart phones, tablets, computers, smart TVs, or any other digital component able to access the internet.



One of the most important aspects of the survey was learning the kinds of artistic ministries Canadian churches offer.

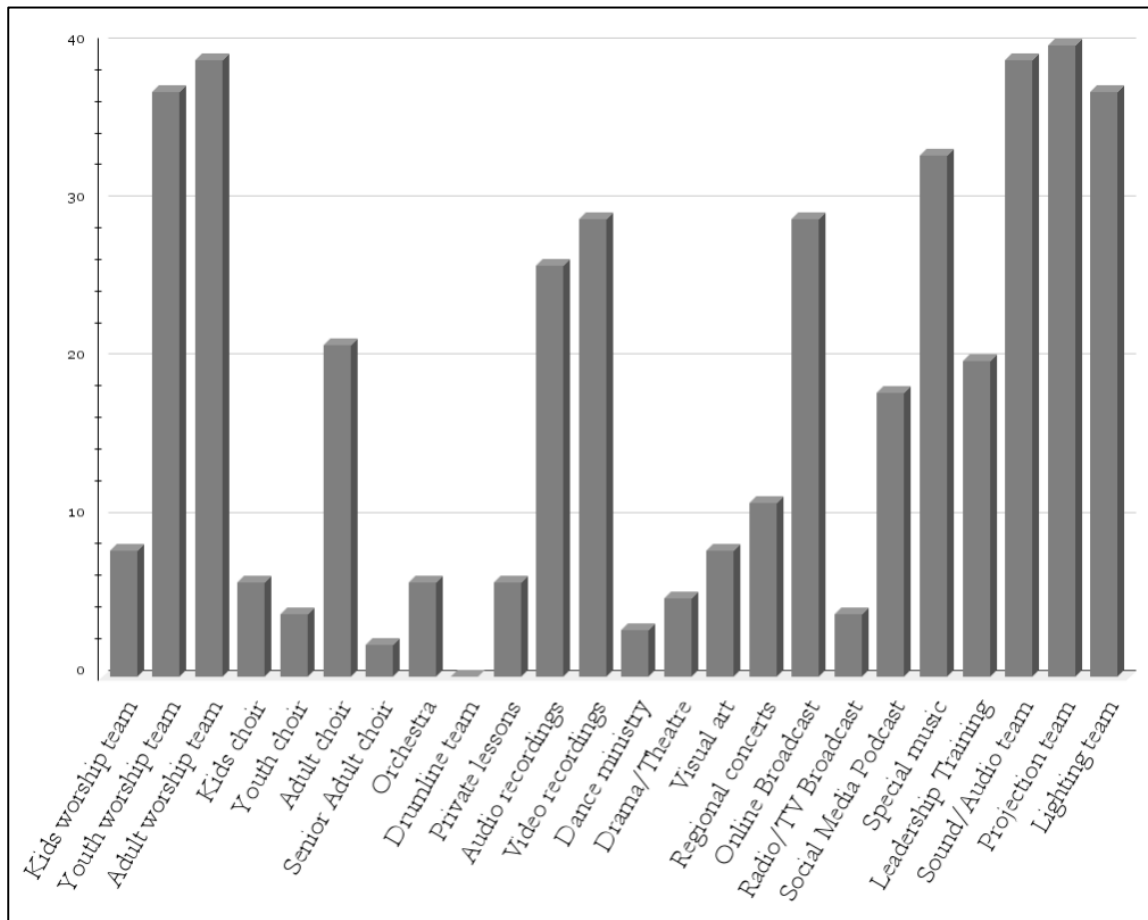


Figure 5. Artistic ministry offerings

Several observations spring from analyzing the above chart of artistic ministry offerings. First, it is clear the evangelical church in Canada feeds off a musical diet of contemporary worship with heavy use of tech. Nearly all churches surveyed offer both youth and adult worship team ministries, with worship services supported by audio, projection, and lighting teams.

Second, the churches studied were significantly influenced by the COVID

pandemic. This was seen in that nearly three quarters of the churches utilize audio and video recording as well as online broadcasting. During the lockdown months, church leaders needed to be creative with virtual ministry in lieu of in-person gatherings. Most churches moved their services online, sometimes using pre-recorded content.

Third, the ministry often called “special music” is not yet extinct. Thirty-three of the forty churches contacted involve solos, duets, or trios in their service planning. Twenty years ago, it was common for services to involve choir pieces, quartets, or soloists.<sup>8</sup> This created a “worship by listening” focus. However, ecclesiastical culture has shifted toward a “worship by participating” focus with more programming for worship teams and congregational singing. Having said this, it is good to see that artistic ministry still includes room for those who may not fit the modern mold of worship team involvement.

The final observation pertains to visual and performance art. Dance, drama/theatre, and visual art were showcased by three, five, and eight churches respectively. These numbers represented a small percentage of the forty-church total. It is possible that a sample with more charismatic congregations would have resulted in higher numbers in ministries like dance. Still, all biblically based churches should study the ways God’s ancient people expressed praise through musical, visual, and even artisan means. Following scriptural examples such as Exodus 35:30–35, Jeremiah 31:4 and 13, Psalm 45:1, and Psalm 150 should encourage the fostering of visual and performance art. Clearly, music is the art form most used in Canadian churches.

### **Demographics: Worship Pastors and Directors**

Before analyzing the respondents’ best practices in terms of theology,

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<sup>8</sup> West Highland Church is a case in point. When I began as worship pastor in the fall of 2001, every Sunday morning service included a choir piece as well as a solo song. Today, the choir sings about once per month and separate solo songs are few and far between.

discipleship, artistry, and leadership, the following figure showcases demographic data about the forty leaders who were surveyed.

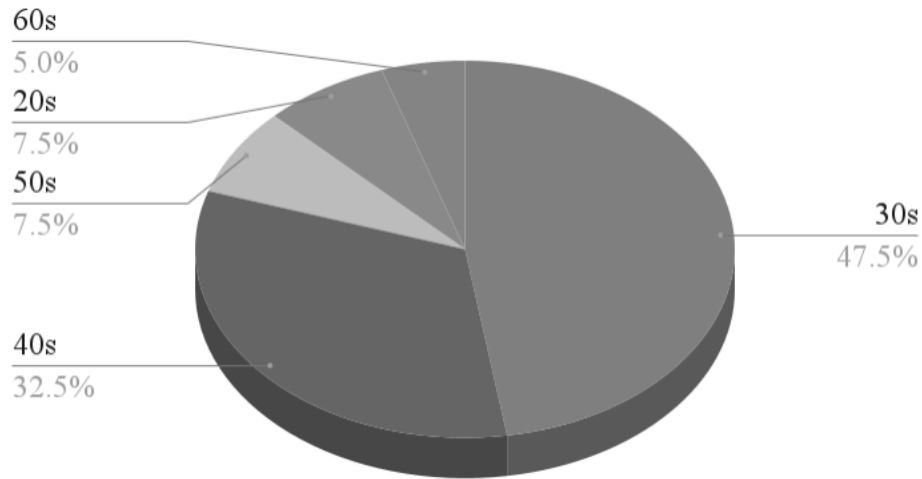


Figure 6. Worship pastor/director ages

Almost 50 percent of the Canadian worship pastors surveyed were in their thirties. Combined with the forties, these two decades equated to 80 percent of those who participated in this study. I found it fascinating that only three respondents (7.5 percent) were in their twenties. The assumption that worship pastoring is restricted to the young is perhaps a fallacy.<sup>9</sup> Equally fascinating was that 5 percent of those surveyed were in their sixties. The opposite assumption that worship pastors must at some point age out of their

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<sup>9</sup> The assumption that worship pastors/leaders must be young is not a documented fact. Rather, this postulation comes as I view modern worship music videos. Most videos from Bethel, Hillsong, Elevation, Maverick City, People and Songs, and other collective groups, showcase youth and young adults in front of the camera. It is rare to see anyone with grey hair. Perhaps the reason for few twenty-year-olds in this study relates to church size. Larger churches likely seek more seasoned pastors in the area of worship.

A Google search for “worship leading not for the old” reveals much discussion of this assumption. Here are some articles: Zac M. Hicks, “Worship Leading, Ageism, and the Fear of Getting Old,” *Zac Hicks*, June 6, 2011, <https://zachicks.com/worship-leading-ageism-and-the-fear-of-getting-old/>; David Santistevan, “When Are You Too Old to Lead Worship?” *Beyond Sunday Worship*, December 2, 2013, <https://www.davidsantistevan.com/old/>; Zac M. Hicks, “Why We Worship Leaders Fear Getting Old,” *Worship Leaders University*, January 16, 2015, <https://www.markcole.ca/why-we-worship-leaders-fear-getting-old/>.

role is also perhaps incorrect.

Statistics of longevity provided an encouraging view of worship staff in Canada.

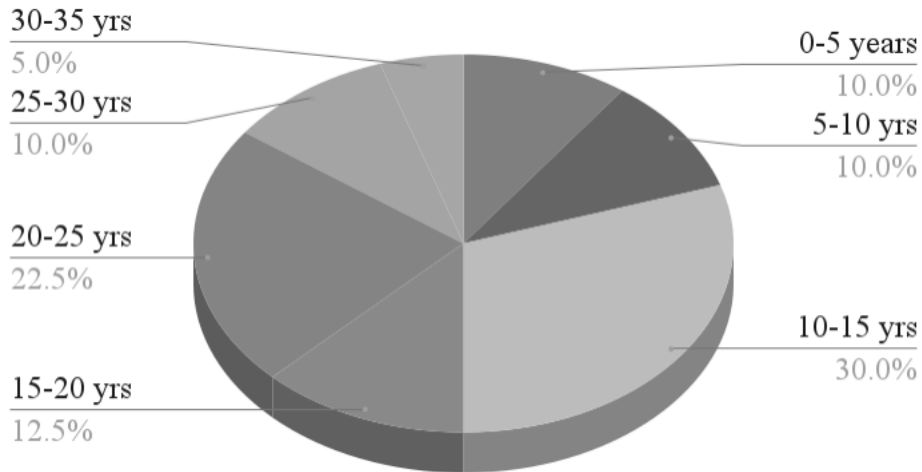


Figure 7. Worship pastor years serving

The largest demographic (30 percent of those surveyed) has served between ten and fifteen years in worship ministry. This is respectable. However, the upper range is even more inspiring with 37.5 percent having served for more than twenty years. Two leaders who replied have pastored for more than thirty years.

The following diagram shows a less encouraging picture in that more than three quarters of worship pastors of Canada's largest churches had not surpassed a college education. This was surprising because more than half of these leaders were older than forty years of age.

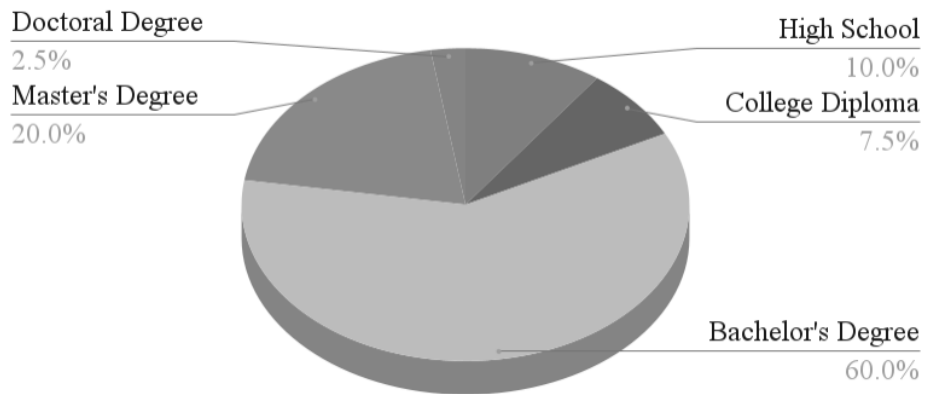


Figure 8. Worship pastor education level percentages

For my next analysis I decided to move away from group data and focus on individual data. Here is a graph comparing each leader in terms of age and education level.

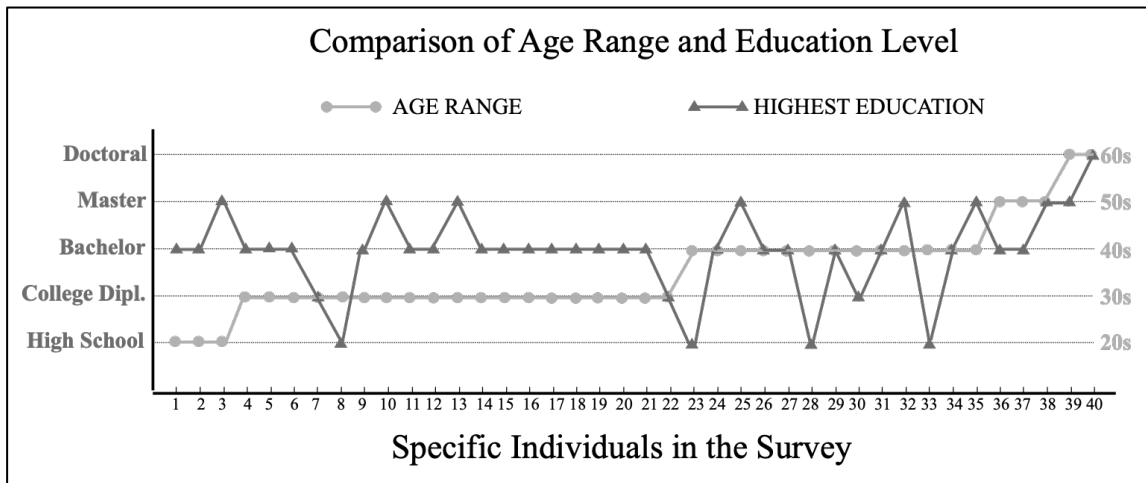


Figure 9. Worship pastor age versus education level

Some interesting observations arise from the graph above. It would make sense

that younger worship pastors would have less education and, as they mature, education would increase. However, the statistics above demonstrate a different story. Three of the four people with only a high school education were in their forties. Those who had completed a master's degree were spread across the age spectrum, from twenties right through fifties. It would not appear that age is a significant factor in determining education level.

We must also conclude that higher education is not an automatic goal for worship staff. The lowest demographic (10 percent of worship pastors in Canada's largest churches) only completed secondary school. Biblically speaking, strong theology is assumed in the calling of Christian workers to worship in truth (John 4:24), to be fully equipped for ministry (2 Tim 3:16–17), to correctly handle the Word of Truth (2 Tim 2:15), to preach the Word (2 Tim 4:2), and even to “keep your head in all situations” (2 Tim 4:5).<sup>10</sup> Since these texts are not restricted to “preaching pastors,” all those who accept the role of “pastor” must take these texts seriously and continue to grow in theological conviction. Canadian worship pastors must embrace a posture of life-long learning. Furthermore, churches should expect and support staff at all levels to progress in this area.

### **Section 1: Theology**

Kevin Navarro writes of the complete worship leader needing to be strong in theology, discipleship, artistry, and leadership.<sup>11</sup> This project considered how Canadian worship pastors approach these aspects of ministry. In Survey Part Two—Theology, the respondents were given three statements based on a five-option Likert scale, where “1” was “strongly disagree,” and “5” was “strongly agree.” The first statement,

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<sup>10</sup> “Keep your head in all situations” (2 Tim 4:5) refers to staying doctrinally strong in the face of heretical teachings. See a fuller explanation above on pages 52–54.

<sup>11</sup> Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader*, 14.

“Theological/doctrinal growth as a worship leader is crucial for faithful ministry,” resulted in a mean of 4.8 out of 5.0. The second assertion, “Worship leaders must ensure sound theology in the songs they choose for corporate singing,” averaged even higher at 4.9. In fact, all respondents strongly agreed with this phrase except for six people who indicated a “4” “agree.” Worship staff in Canada’s larger churches clearly hold theology in high regard and desire to lead their churches in theologically robust ways. I wonder at the high valuation of these two statements based on the data showing that 18 percent of respondents (six people) did not have a college degree (figure 8). How can there be a nearly perfect support of theological growth without a purposeful commitment to education?

The third Likert scale statement read, “Worship leaders should foster the use of Scripture in aspects of the service such as corporate prayer, the call to worship, and other Bible readings.” The following was the result:

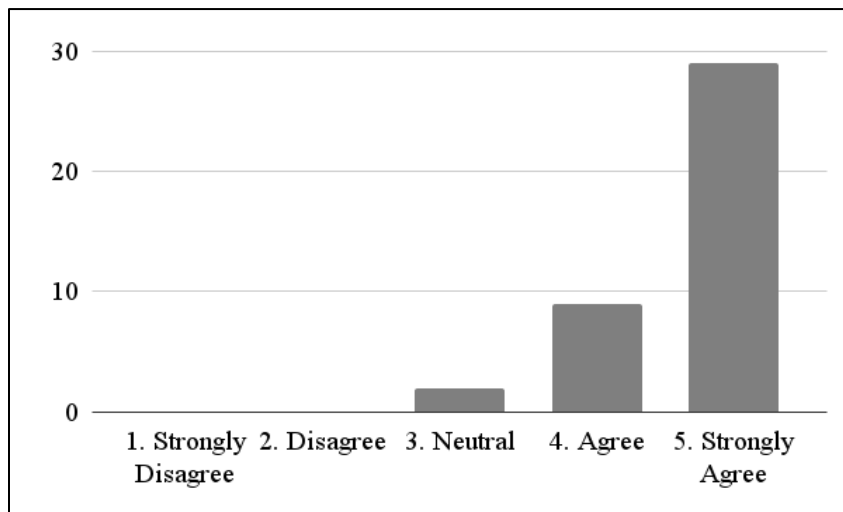


Figure 10. Commitment to use Scripture in worship services

This statement resulted in a mean of 4.7, where two people indicated a neutral

stance while all others agreed or strongly agreed.

I was challenged and encouraged as I carefully studied 1 Chronicles 15–16, Acts 2, Colossians 3, 2 Timothy 2 and 2 Timothy 4 for this project. These Scriptures came alive in my Christian experience as they related to my roles in worship leading and service planning. I was interested in the lists of verses that my peers would offer. So, as a practical follow-up to the quantitative question in figure 10, those surveyed were asked to identify their top three Scriptures influencing worship ministry in their church. By asking this open-ended question, I assumed there would emerge a predictable list of Scriptures often equated with worship, such as Psalm 150, John 4:24, Colossians 3:16–17, and Revelation 5:12. However, I discovered a much more diverse palette of biblical color. The following chart represents the most frequently chosen verses:

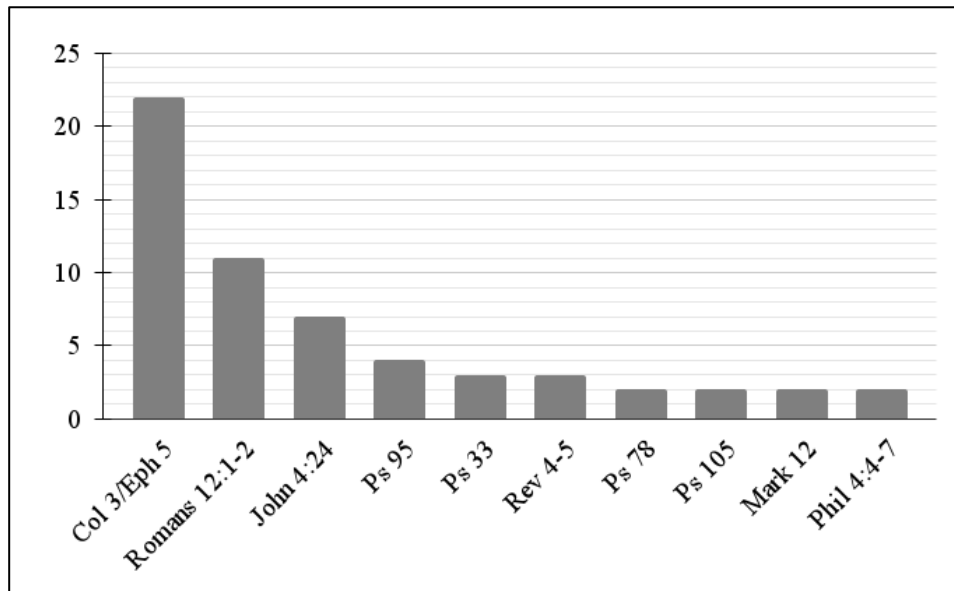


Figure 11. Influential Scriptures for worship ministry

All the Scriptures above were chosen by at least two Canadian worship pastors. Far and away, the most beloved Scriptures were the parallel “psalms, hymns, and songs



from the spirit” texts in Ephesians 5 and Colossians 3, selected by more than half of those surveyed. I, too, lean into these passages as one of my primary New Testament sources for instructions on corporate worship.<sup>12</sup> Commenting on Paul’s wording of “psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit,” one survey respondent wrote, “Colossians 3:14–17 helps me remember that singing songs together is a powerful way to teach one another the wisdom of the Word of God and not just an icebreaker or time filler. We should also be singing different forms and styles of music all centered in the Word of God and biblically sound.” Romans 12:1–2, “true and proper worship,” was common to eleven leaders while John 4:24, “in spirit and in truth,” appeared in seven surveys.<sup>13</sup>

Another surveyed pastor comments on the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman,

John 4:24 is obviously a commonly chosen passage when it comes to worship, but for me it is significant because I grew up in a very traditional, conservative church setting that focused greatly on the “truth” side, and then went to a charismatic Bible college that focused a lot on the “Spirit” side. I’ve seen both and how important it is that they come together when we worship God. You can’t have one without the other, and each actually becomes far less significant if it isn’t coupled with the other.

Interestingly, fourteen separate psalms were selected a total of twenty-one times among the forty pastors/directors surveyed. One worship pastor, referencing the Psalms, comments,

First and foremost, Christ in us enables us to worship freely and rightly, but Psalm 78:72—the skillful hands and upright heart of David as our example of leadership—these are standards we continuously put before our teams. We talk about this in our auditions and remind ourselves regularly how important these two things are for all those wanting to serve the Lord in any way—musically, creatively, or not. Not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to, we examine our hearts and habits with sober judgement. We invite the Holy Spirit to reveal issues and call us to repentance where needed, so we remain humble and ready in our devotion to the Lord.

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<sup>12</sup> See chapter 2, page 34.

<sup>13</sup> Figure 6 showcases only those texts which were common to at least two worship pastors surveyed. However, there were a host of other Scriptures only chosen by one leader, (Gen 22; Deut 6; 1 Sam 15; Psalm 23; 40; 96; 100; 111; 118; 133; 136; 149; 150; Prov 3:5–6; Isa 12:5; 29:13; Amos 5:23–24; Matt 11; 22:37; Mark 12; Luke 19; John 15; 17; 2 Cor 4:16–18; 5:14–15; Gal 2:20; Eph 3:12; 4:11–12; Phil 2:3–11; 3:12; Heb 10:19–25; 12:28; 13:15; 1 Pet 2:9–10; 5:5; and Rev 7).

Navarro writes that a commitment to biblical theology in life and ministry is important for those in worship leadership.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Navarro claims, a worship leader is not “complete” without healthy theological perspectives and practices. The Canadian worship pastors surveyed showed strong conviction in this area, backed by robust scriptural breadth and depth.

### **Theology: Interviews**

As a follow-up to the forty online surveys, I interviewed eight of the leaders, from a broad provincial and denominational spectrum, probing deeper into the four Navarro categories. In terms of theology, I wanted to understand how theology impacts service planning. I wanted to ascertain best practices in terms of selecting (or deselecting) worship songs. Do Canadian worship directors work with their lead pastors in carefully choosing fitting songs for worship? Were some songs rejected because of doctrinal challenges? Every pastor interviewed indicated a definite policy and/or procedure for this process.

Johnny Markin, Worship Director at Cloverdale Baptist Church in Surrey, British Columbia, and Director of the Worship Leader Institute, says,

Our lead pastor is very involved with the development of the services. . . . [Our elders] had set up a couple of exclusions of things that they didn't want represented by their church. And one of those was songs by particular charismatic churches that they didn't feel were preaching a whole, a trinitarian gospel or a gospel that represented the biblical text very well. So, if they are a publisher or a creator of the song, we won't use it, even if it is a great song and we can't see anything in the lyrics. They don't want the association that somebody sees this organization and says, “Oh, let's see what else they've got,” and then runs into their teaching and other stuff.<sup>15</sup>

This approach of avoiding certain publishers is rare. The surveys showed that most churches prefer to evaluate songs on an individual/lyrical basis.

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<sup>14</sup> Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader*, 17.

<sup>15</sup> Johnny Markin, interview with the author, February 9, 2023.

Keith Sparrow, Worship and Communications Pastor at Forward Church in Cambridge, Ontario, relates how the doctrine of his church focuses his process of thinking through songs theologically,

I have always considered that lead pastor/worship pastor relationship to be really, really important. As I'm trying to lead our congregation in worship on a Sunday morning, knowing where we're going with the teaching, knowing where they [preaching pastor] are going in their discipleship journey is so valuable as well. . . . The doctrine and theology of our church impacts our songs quite deeply. The pastoral role of the worship pastor is that you have to have a clear understanding, first of all where your church stands, and then, look at new songs through that lens.<sup>16</sup>

Creative Arts Pastor at Bethany Community Church in St Catharines, Ontario, Laura Huh, describes their philosophy of song choice,

Generally speaking, the tension is around, of course, we want to sing everything that is scriptural and if things are too vague, we will not sing that. I do tend to use a finer tooth comb for songs that I think could resonate, but I just want to be careful with. Regarding context—what works for who you are and what God is calling your congregation to be? A song that is perfectly fine might not be right for this season that we're in.<sup>17</sup>

Huh's selection of songs goes beyond what the lyrics say to what the lyrics fail to say. In her words, "if things are too vague, we will not sing that." This is a mature way of ensuring that ecclesial song teaches truth and more than that, specific truth.

Jeff Kendrick, Pastor of Worship Ministries at Mission City Bible Church in Brantford, Ontario, explains a very practical way their church filters songs through a theological grid,

When it comes to adding songs to our repertoire, we basically, obviously want everything to be spirit and truth, you know, John 4. And so we work really hard at assuring that the lyrics are teaching the theology and doctrine that we affirm here. And so we have a question that we ask. We say, "Would you, could you preach this?" Every song that I have, that I want to bring, or that anyone wants to bring, I bring to my senior pastor and say "Would you, could you preach this? Would you literally take these words and put them in a sermon and preach them from the pulpit?" That's our initial check and balance on the theology side of the music that

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<sup>16</sup> Keith Sparrow, interview with the author, January 30, 2023.

<sup>17</sup> Laura Huh, interview with the author, February 6, 2023.

we are bringing in.<sup>18</sup>

It appears that larger Canadian churches held a commitment not only to singing great songs but in *only* singing theological accurate/fitting songs in their contexts. The worship staff at these churches were actively involved, in partnership with lead pastors) as gatekeepers of ecclesial theology—especially in terms of lyrical content in their worship songs. Guarding song theology is one way in which worship planners can fulfill the expectation of being devoted to “the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42)

## **Section 2: Discipleship**

By definition, every Christian is a disciple, a Christ-follower.<sup>19</sup> Jesus said to the Twelve (and by extension to us), “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matt 16:24). Personal commitment and action are required by those who believe. Christian leaders must guard their hearts and stay connected to the Vine (John 15:5). This is usually fostered through healthy habits in spiritual disciples such as prayer, Bible reading and memorization—spending devotional time with the Lord.

The first part of the survey, around discipleship, included a Likert phase of three questions. The respondents were asked to rate three realities where “1” was “strongly disagree,” and “5” was “strongly agree.” The first phrase, “Practicing spiritual disciplines (such as prayer, Scripture memory, solitude, and more) is essential for longevity in church ministry,” scored an average of 4.8 out of 5.0. The majority of those surveyed strongly agreed with this statement.

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<sup>18</sup> Jeff Kendrick, interview with the author, February 27, 2023.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Dever, *Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 15.

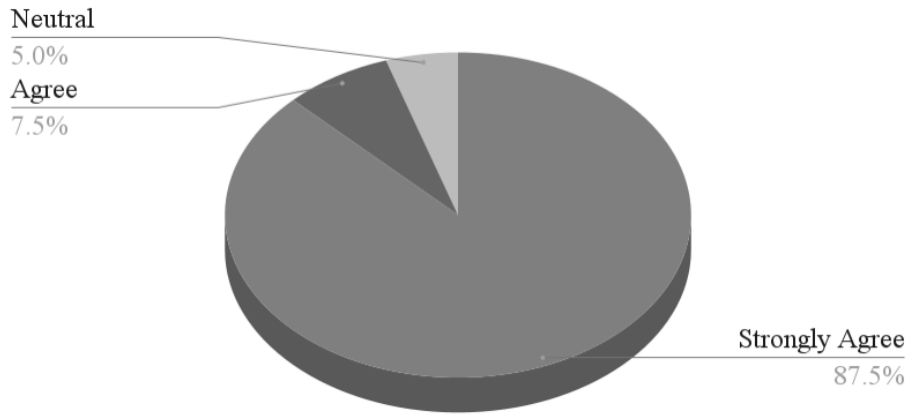


Figure 12. Spiritual disciplines are essential for ministry

The second phrase, “I enjoy intentionally discipling others in their faith,” scored slightly lower at 4.6 out of 5.0. Notice the following,

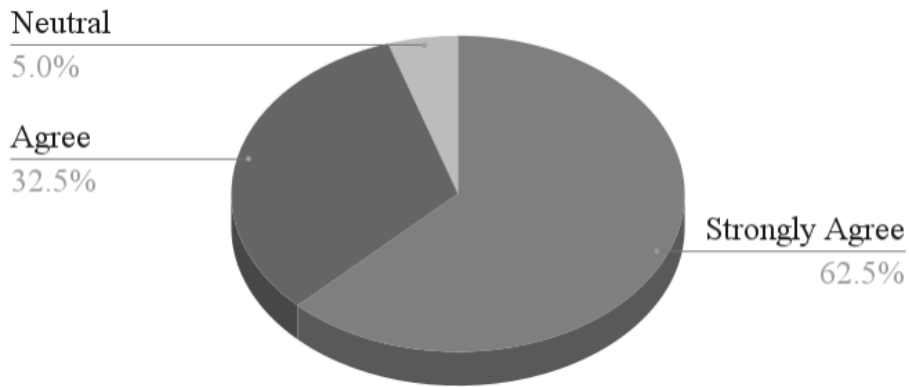


Figure 13. I enjoy discipling others in their faith

The third phrase, “It is important that each leader is regularly disciplined by a more mature believer,” registered lower still at 4.3 out of 5.0. Still, 85 percent supported the idea of being disciplined by another.

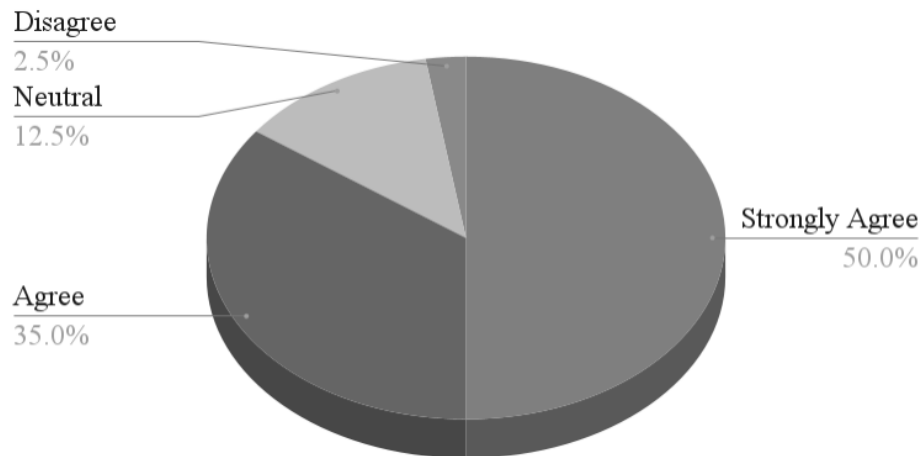


Figure 14. Importance of being disciplined by another

These three discipleship concepts were placed in a logical order, starting with discipling oneself, moving to discipling others, and finally seeking to be disciplined by someone further along in the faith.

It seems that worship directors in Canada’s larger churches are committed to personal spiritual health and committed to discipling others. However, there is less dedication to coming under the mentoring influence of a more mature leader. Canadian worship pastors are asked to manage many responsibilities in life and ministry. They are expected to stay current with worship music and tech trends and shepherd a host of congregants. In striving to succeed in these areas worship staff in Canada’s larger churches should stay grounded by regular coaching. Even Moses needed the mentoring of his father-in-law (Exod 18:17–23). The benefits of “iron sharpening iron” (Prov 27:17) and “older men counseling younger men” (Titus 2:6–7) are just as applicable to worship pastors as to any other position of leadership.

Following the Likert section, a long-form open-ended question gave those surveyed the opportunity to describe *how* they fostered healthy discipleship among the musicians and artists they served with. I gathered qualitative data through the following

question, “How does worship ministry benefit from discipleship? In other words, what have you found works well in keeping your musicians, tech people, and artists, spiritually healthy?”

One Ontario worship pastor responds,

Worship ministry benefits from discipleship in that worship is incomplete without discipleship. According to Harold Best, “Worship is the continuous outpouring of all that I am, all that I do and all that I can ever become in light of a chosen or choosing God.”<sup>20</sup> If Best is correct, and worship is a response to His glorious grace, then worship must include discipleship.

The same pastor then proceeds to equate discipleship with leadership development, “Also, discipleship is, put simply, the recruitment and training up of worshipers. There wouldn’t be a ‘worship ministry’ if discipleship wasn’t happening.”

This is why I included an open-ended question asking the “how” of discipleship. If I were to ask a simple binary question “do you disciple others?,” this would have been a cold survey. I was glad to read of my peers’ passion for pouring into others with disciple-making purpose.

Another leader opens with a strong philosophical statement then hints at a detailed plan for individual discipleship: “Healthy team members equal a healthy worship ministry. Members are part of a small group or attending a weekly ministry night (men’s or women’s). While our teams pray together and study various materials at rehearsals, it is important for them to be part of a more intentional discipleship.” I appreciate this expectation that worship team members automatically attend a discipling ministry. This combats the possibility of musicians viewing worship team as simply a “gig,” with no responsibility for personal holiness or accountability to the body of Christ.

A worship director from British Columbia contributes a three-part methodology of keeping musicians, tech people, and artists, spiritually healthy,

Soul-Care:

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<sup>20</sup> Harold M. Best, *Unceasing Worship: Biblical Perspectives on Worship and the Arts* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2003), 18.

As a team leader and pastor, I believe it's essential to care for people's souls! This involves taking the time to build relationships with those on the team and providing pastoral care through visits/coffees and prayer. It's easy in worship ministry to see people as a means to an end, rather than people to love and equip!

Leading with Vulnerability:

I have found that being honest about my failures and weaknesses has allowed others on the team to be honest about their own discipleship journey. There is a huge difference between telling people what the Christian journey is supposed to look like versus actually being on the journey with people.

Establishing Prayer as the Foundation:

On Monday evenings we have each of our campus worship teams practicing in the same building at the same time. One of our essential rhythms involves bringing everyone together at the start to pray. This provides an opportunity to function as a family, to open up the floor to pray for the needs of those who are present, as well as praying for the upcoming weekend gatherings. These times also allow us to read Scripture together.

Every Christian is called to make disciples (Matt 28:19). Every Christian leader is called to not only be involved in personal disciple-making but also in passing on the faith through intentional leadership development (2 Tim 2:2). Clearly, the worship pastors in this study take seriously their calling of making disciples of those they serve with.

### **Discipleship: Interviews**

As I approached part two of research gathering, I wanted to understand how those I interviewed keep themselves healthy as disciples of Jesus. Just like airline passengers are asked to install their own air mask before helping a child, pastors are responsible to take care of their own souls before attempting to coach others. Keith Sparrow of Forward Church in Cambridge, Ontario, states this even more strongly, "If you are not growing as a disciple of Christ, it is impossible for you to grow others. . . . Our public worship must be a representation of our private worship." For Sparrow, this involves reading the Bible daily with his wife, not simply reading as part of his service planning or songwriting, but personally asking God to speak to him through the Word.

Alex Farley, a worship pastor from Église le Sentier (The Path Church) in Gatineau, Quebec, uses an app called "PrayerMate" to help with his daily time in the Word and in prayer. Farley loads devotionals into the app and organizes prayer lists to



keep himself on track. As a family, they try to grow together by reading and discussing the French version of Tim Keller’s “New City Catechism” after dinner regularly.

Cliff Cline of Hope Bible Church in Oakville, Ontario, poetically describes discipleship as, “Showing our people and showing ourselves that God’s ways work.” Personally, Cline counsels that we need to have a devotional life that informs and feeds our own soul. Also from the Great Commission Collective, Jeff Kendrick has tried different devotionals over the years, but his preferred method is to study through God’s Word in its entirety in a year. Kendrick has done this for the past twenty-eight years, usually canonically. Kendrick’s daily habits also include prayer—primarily to fulfill Matthew 6:33, “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.”

Johnny Markin, a worship pastor in British Columbia, describes his routine of spending time each morning with his wife reading Scripture. Markin says, “It’s very, very formative. It’s that long view of going through the Scriptures, and hearing God speak, and responding to it in prayer.” Similarly, Albertan Ken Dosso admits it is difficult for him to read a chapter of the Bible a day. It takes him “too long to get into it and too long to get out of it.” Dosso quotes Fred Smith in commending a “balanced feeding,” meaning, reading something from the Bible, something from the ancients, and something from a contemporary author (or a podcast). Dosso explains the discipline of meditation,

At my age and stage, being now later in my career, I don’t always need more information, what I need is better digestion of the information I have. So, I feel like meditating on Scripture is of increased importance to me. I try to focus on one thing and get the application deeper into my soul. My prayer life has gotten better and better, I would say. And I feel like that’s a result of meditation. Those two things go together for me in a way that I didn’t expect.<sup>21</sup>

The second question I asked was their best practice advice on discipling others in worship ministry. I wanted to understand what works in Canadian churches. Does a church-wide system of small groups meet this need, or do worship pastors use targeted

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<sup>21</sup> Ken Dosso, Interview with the author, March 23, 2023.

discipleship tools with those they work with?

Philosophically, Cliff Cline commends other worship staff, as pastors, to be interested in what it means to be a godly young man or woman, to talk about why we tithe, and about sabbath, and about humility. This practical approach follows the Old Testament model of sharing truth while doing everyday life together (Deut 6).

Wesleyan music leader Marc Jolicoeur, from Moncton, NB, does not resonate with the idea of creating unique small groups restricted to worship team members. He sees this as developing unnecessary cliques within the church, fostering a specialized “vibe” within the worship ministry. Rather, he wants the worship team members who stand up front on Sunday not just to “lead *with* their best friends but to lead their best friends.” In this way, worship team members are integrated into the full life of the church. Jolicoeur admits that musically and technologically they are not likely as polished as other churches because they spend less time rehearsing and more time investing in small groups (including Bible study, prayer, doing life together, and serving together). Jolicoeur is glad to support this intentional surrendering of production quality in favor of deeper relationships and healthier growth. Even though basically everyone is in a small group, Jolicoeur also engages section leaders to care for and disciple the musicians (drum leader, electric guitar leader, etc.).

One clear commonality among most of those interviewed is a practice of including time in the Word and prayer as part of rehearsals. This time usually spans fifteen to twenty minutes, or in the case of one church, up to an hour. Johnny Markin comments, “It helps put God first and put his word first in everything we do. It is beyond the music. What we are doing here is a calling to serve the body of Christ in a special way.” Church musicians, and certainly worship pastors, are first and foremost disciples of Jesus. Our discipleship comes before chord charts, audio faders, and guitar strings.

The health of a local church is reflective of, and directly impacted by, the health of its leaders. This includes those who lead worship. Through the surveys and

interviews, Canadian worship pastors showed a strong commitment to personal spiritual growth and to “doing spiritual good for others” in their worship ministry.<sup>22</sup>

### Section 3: Artistry

Worship pastors are known as the leaders who work with ecclesial “artists.” In fact, fourteen of the forty worship staff surveyed included “arts” in their job titles.<sup>23</sup> The following paragraphs summarize the survey and interview data in this category.

The first section of the survey involved a three-part Likert questionnaire. Worship pastors were asked about their perspective on practicing their musical instruments. I wanted to know if Canadian musicians practice frequently, specifically to increase in skill. In other words, do worship pastors continue to advance in their instrument even after they have been hired in a church? The data shows that around two thirds (62.5 percent) of respondents affirm that they practice to increase in skill.

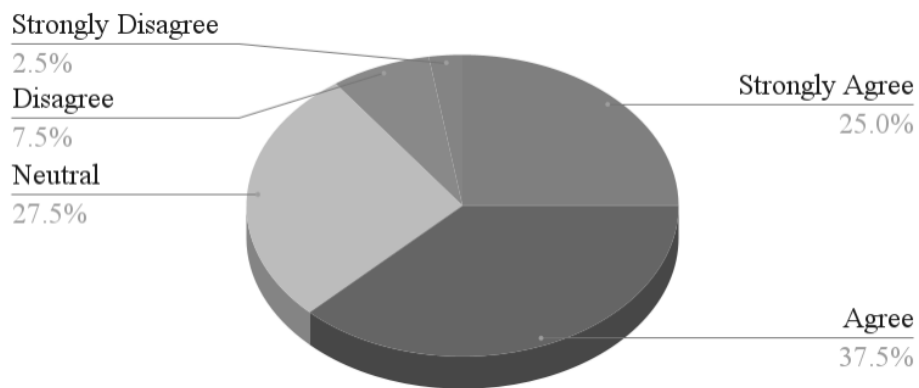


Figure 15. I regularly practice my musical instrument

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<sup>22</sup> Mark Dever, *Discipling*, 17.

<sup>23</sup> Most of these fourteen leaders were titled Pastor/Director of “worship arts” or “creative arts.”

To explore this issue further I asked how these leaders grow in their musical or artistic skill. This open-ended opportunity showcased some interesting responses. One person writes,

(Not necessarily in this order) I grow in my own skills by 1. Surrounding myself with people who are more skilled than I am, 2. Challenge myself to learn specific arrangements of songs, 3. Intentionally deviate from specific arrangements and come up with my own arrangements, 4. Surrounding myself with people who are less skilled than I am (my skills grow when I am trying to elevate someone else's skills).

Another leader describes a well-rounded methodology, "Listen broadly to other Christian and secular music, read theology and books on ministry, continue to grow as a songwriter and arranger through working on projects for the church and outside the church." Finally, the following worship director shares honestly, with what appears to be a mixture of sadness but also pastoral purposefulness, "At this point in my musical life, I am on the decline physically which is impacting my ability to improve. I do still try and go on YouTube to learn little tweaks etc., but in reality, I am no longer a professional musician whose main role is to maintain an elite playing level, but rather a Pastor who happens to be able to play and lead." As I too get older, I resonate with what this leader says. However, being an artist does not require that I be better than everyone else at guitar, piano, or trumpet. My responsibility is to faithfully steward the gifts God has given.

How do Canadian worship pastors increase in their musical and artistic skill? They practice. Most Canadian worship directors know the simplest, yet most obvious solution for skill increase is to work on their craft.<sup>24</sup>

The next inquiry involved best practices in presenting new worship songs. Do churches have a system in place for introducing new songs? Ninety percent of surveyed churches confirmed that they have such a system in place. This is not surprising as a

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<sup>24</sup> This question included a wealth of best practice information and is included in full in appendix 4.

hallmark of free church “liturgy” is the lack of prescribed lectionary. These churches regularly seek out newly composed songs to add to their repertoire.

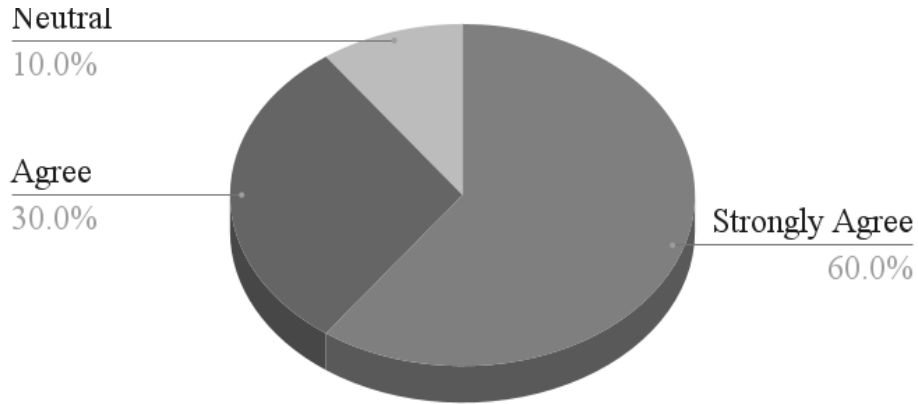


Figure 16. I have a system for introducing new songs

Finally, I asked the worship pastors to quantify their churches’ inclusion of visual arts in ministry (ex. painting, sculpting, sketching). I was interested in discovering Canadian church best practices in more than just musical artistry. According to the chart above (figure 5), music was the most common art form utilized in Canada’s larger churches. This particular question focused on visual arts like painting, sculpting, and sketching.

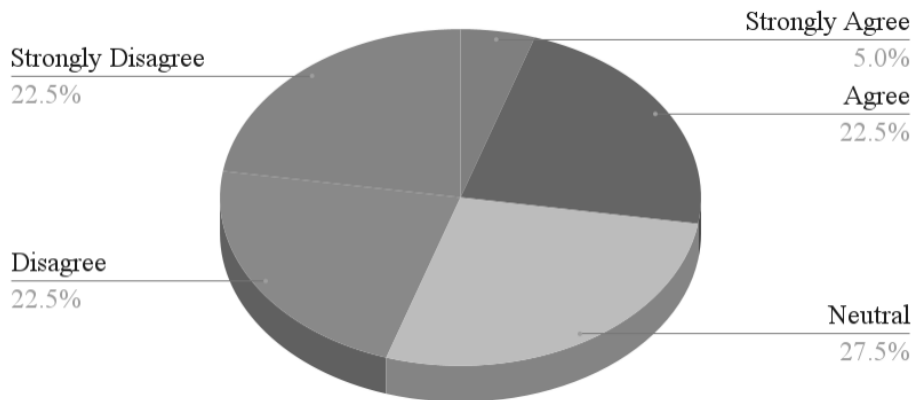


Figure 17. My church fosters visual arts in ministry

This time, the polls showed churches split on this issue with 27.5 percent affirming the use of visual arts and 45 percent who do not offer visual art ministry at all. I am unsure what it means that 27.5 percent of respondents indicated neutrality. Perhaps these churches did not offer visual art expression at the time of the survey but would be in favor of doing so in the future.

### **Artistry: Interviews**

Laura Huh reminds us of the history of church musicianship that included patronage:

Michelangelo was paid by the church to build something. Bach was paid by the church to compose. Like, he was a music pastor like us. And he was commissioned to write. For me, the best of artistry belonged to the church and was used to point people to Jesus. We have people who are gifted. [Today, we need to use] the best of the arts to call out to God's glory. . . to bring out dance, to bring out visual art, to use the full complement of how God has gifted us to tell his story.<sup>25</sup>

Laura Huh is correct that the church has historically been a key incubator of artistic talent. I would not be the musician I am today without the investment of many Christian artists in my life over the years.

Ken Dosso, former music professor at Briercrest Bible College and current worship pastor at Lethbridge Evangelical Free Church, admits the challenge that many artistic leaders experience during the longevity of ministry. The past few years brought dark clouds of church challenges and COVID restrictions, both of which introduced a dry spell for Dosso:

Through all of that I sort of lost any creative will. It was really a survival mode. There wasn't much creativity in my life then. I did creative things, but it was all forced. It was not from a deep well. I feel like in the last couple of months I'm starting to come back to life. I did a bit of writing for Christmas Eve and Good Friday and I think it's good writing. I do feel like we are starting to swing back up again. I'm working one-on-one with a number of young musicians, sort of helping

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<sup>25</sup> Laura Huh, interview with the author, February 6, 2023.

them. No one is writing right now but I hope we'll get back to that.<sup>26</sup>

I share Dosso's desire to write music that glorifies the Lord and edifies his people. Canada needs fresh, biblically faithful songs to give voice to a new generation of worshippers. Beyond this personal snapshot, Dosso shares an artist outreach his church held during the confines of COVID Christmas,

Someone had an idea we should do a drive-in Christmas thing. So we built a stage and we built sets. We rewired the church so we could pull out lighting into the parking lot. We had people signing up. We had forty cars per performance. A fourteen-minute-long performance, with a minute to switch over. We ran it for four-five nights and had about 1500 people come through in their cars, and it was all FM radio transition. So we pre-recorded the whole sound track, all the music, all the talking. We lip-synced to it [the track] because it was cold outside, and there was wind, etc. We do crazy things here. We try to be flexible and usually it works.<sup>27</sup>

Stories like these inspire my own creativity. I am reminded that I am not alone in the desire to advance artistry for the sake of Christ—to recount the glories of his gospel. Navarro writes that “Artists know how to appreciate and create. . . . They [worship leaders] must be able to articulate, through their art form, the message that God reveals as he redeems a people for himself.”<sup>28</sup> Canadian worship pastors must not just champion doctrine and discipleship, they are also called to the beauty of Jesus through the beauty of art.

#### **Section 4: Leadership**

The final essential characteristic of Navarro's *The Complete Worship Leader* is that of leadership—a key purpose behind this project. My longevity of service at West Highland Church showed a need for personal growth in leadership. My ability to direct a significant department within a larger Canadian congregation was lacking as time progressed. I needed help with concepts such as vision casting, coaching, leadership

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<sup>26</sup> Ken Dosso, interview with the author, March 23, 2023.

<sup>27</sup> Ken Dosso, interview with the author, March 23, 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader*, 79.

development, and helping a church move through change. These concepts were equally at the forefront of my thinking as I transitioned to our new church in Barrie, Ontario, partway through this project. The following are some discoveries from the surveys and interviews.

### **Leadership: Surveys**

The survey gathered data on common leadership responsibilities among worship staff. The first question showed that three quarters of those consulted enjoy auditioning new musicians.

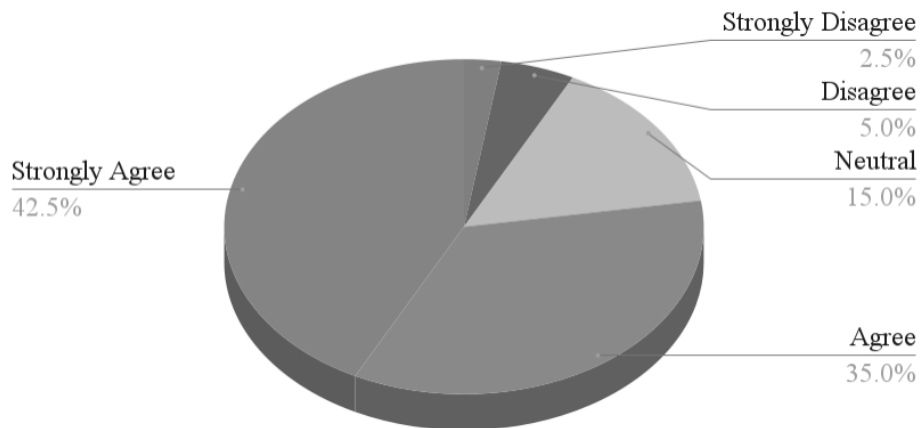


Figure 18. I enjoy auditioning musicians for worship team

I am surprised this number is not higher. Auditioning new talent is part of the joy of leadership development. Perhaps those who did not agree with this statement audition musicians but do not actually enjoy doing so. Perhaps they do not relish the process of rejecting people who do fail the audition. The question was unclear in this regard.

The next question was very related and indicated that 75 percent of respondents intentionally develop leaders in all areas of worship ministry (such as



instrumental, tech, and worship leadership.

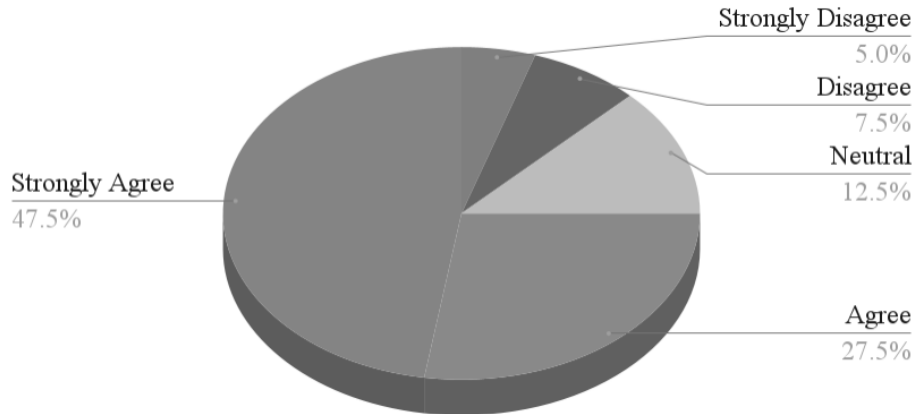


Figure 19. I develop leaders for all areas of worship ministry

One of the primary roles of every worship pastor is recruiting and equipping gospel-centered worship leaders, implied in 2 Timothy 2:2, “entrust to reliable people who will be able to teach others also.” Eighty-five percent of those surveyed have a system for training new worship leaders.

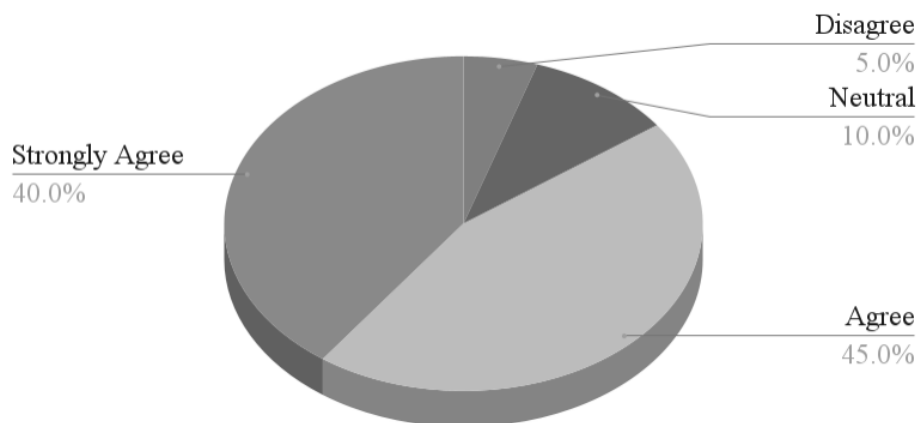


Figure 20. My church has a process for training worship leaders

One pastor describes, “We have an onboarding process that every new worship leader goes through that includes teaching/talk time, as well as shadowing in rehearsals and services together as co-leaders for a season until they are ready to lead on their own. We have books we use as well as working through our church’s DNA.”

Training new worship leaders is one of the key joys in my ministry. Over the years, I have used various methods in raising up new leaders. One Canadian worship pastor explains his process,

All depends on what level they're coming in at. Assuming they already have the skill set, we start with working through our congregational values: Grace, Vulnerability & Discipleship. We have a video teaching series for this. Then we have them attend rehearsals and team nights to acclimatize. Often, we have them sit in for one song or two and/or not lead anything the first few times they’re on. Then we try to give consistent feedback and work through how each skill set can interact with and support our Worship ministry values.

This is a very robust process that connects not only to musical and leadership skill, but also to the priority of discipleship. I would like to see this strategy outlined on paper or in an online tutorial. Other churches would benefit from such a helpful method. Another Canadian worship pastor contributes,

I learned this process years ago from working in a non-church environment. And it’s a very common method. It’s the classic “I do/you watch, I do more/you do some, you do more/I do some, you do/I watch.” And this happens over the course of months. In a perfect world (not here, yet), I would utilize kids/youth worship as well. In our case, I utilize our sites—so they [new leaders] can get their “feet wet” and “work on their chops” (the skill/talent portion of worship) at our sites where there is a bit more grace and the crowds are small before they lead at our main site. But throughout all that, there are multiple conversations, meetings, coffee times, etc.

The common methodological thread among those who responded is “intentionality.” Canadian worship pastors show a commitment to raising up the next generation of worship leaders through the hard work of intentional, one-on-one coaching.

Third, I asked the worship pastors to quantify their practice of volunteer appreciation. Since churches can only pay people to fill a few select ministry positions, the rest must be filled by unpaid volunteers. Expressing gratitude for these servants is essential for the health of a ministry. Seventy percent of respondents indicated they

follow a system for blessing their volunteers.

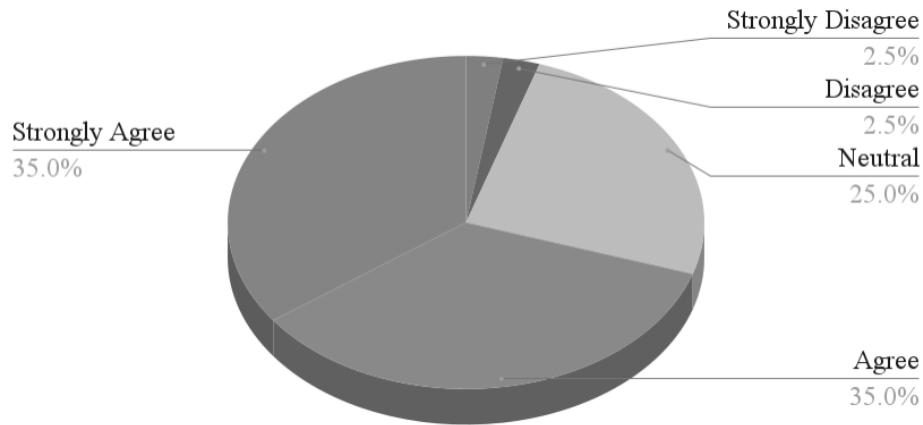


Figure 21. I utilize a system of volunteer appreciation

A follow-up question provided an in-depth description of the system of volunteer appreciation these worship pastors use. Several churches mentioned a social event at least once per year for this purpose. One church formally recognizes those who have served for twenty years. Most leaders who were surveyed used simple cards given out occasionally. One leader hand-writes appreciation cards every week and includes a candy or chocolate with each note!

In summary, almost all churches contacted utilize four forms of appreciation: annual fellowship gatherings, occasional gifts, personalized cards, and regular verbal affirmation.

Finally, I asked about personal development. Thirty out of forty pastors responded that they pursue development in their own leadership by attending conferences, upgrading education, etc.

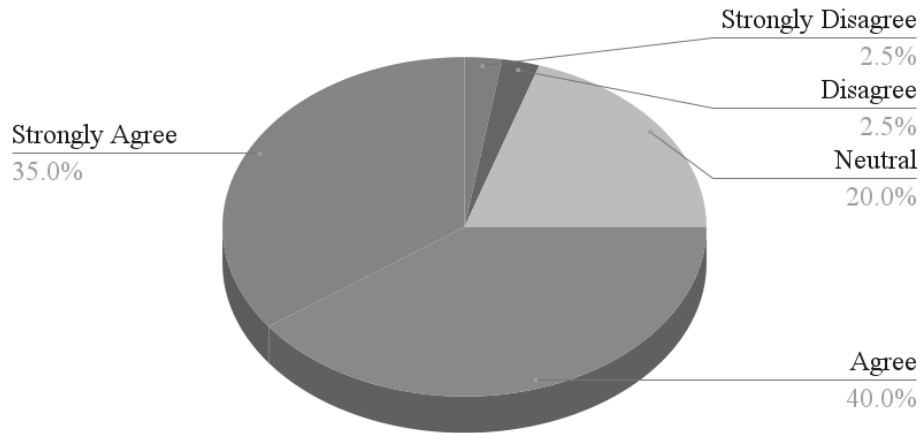


Figure 22. I pursue personal ministry development

This is an interesting statistic in comparison to education level (figure 8), which showed several without a college degree. I surmise that the majority of Canadian worship pastors pursue upgrading their skills but not necessarily in formal academic settings. This showcases minimal support for graduate-level study in worship in Canada.<sup>29</sup>

The final two statistical questions centered on the practical software or hardware tools these Canadian churches use for planning and leading worship. First, I asked, “If you use digital resources, what are your three favorite digital tools for corporate live worship leadership?”

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<sup>29</sup> Only nine out of forty worship pastors surveyed have a master’s or doctoral degree (figure 4, p. 102).

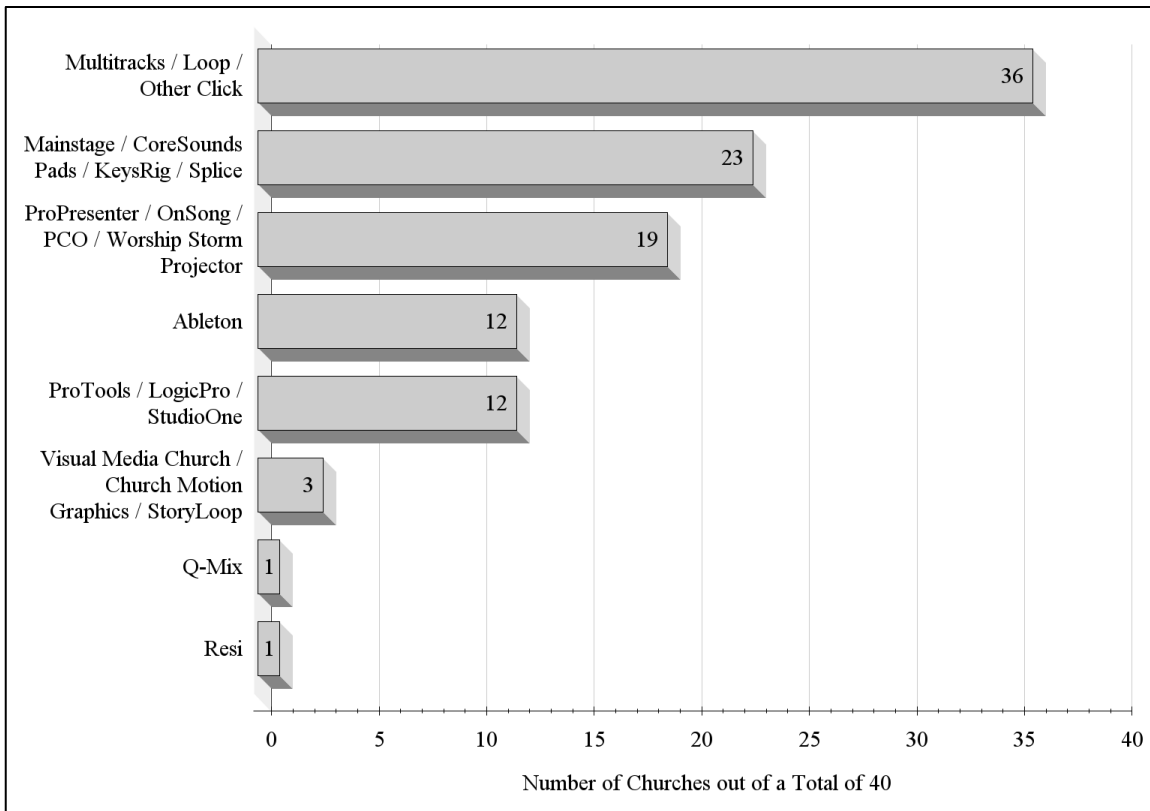


Figure 23. Software and online resources for live worship leadership

Thirty-six of the forty churches surveyed used Multitracks, Loop Community, or some other click source.<sup>30</sup> This means only 10 percent of those surveyed did not utilize click tracks. Computer-based keyboard sounds, especially through Main Stage were popular with twenty-three respondents. Although several listed ProPresenter, no one mentioned PowerPoint, Easy Worship, or Media Shout. These might have been listed if a question was asked specifically about “Presentation Software.”

Second, I asked, “What are your three most useful software programs for planning weekly services?”

<sup>30</sup> Multitracks was referenced by twenty-five leaders, Loop Community by eight leaders.

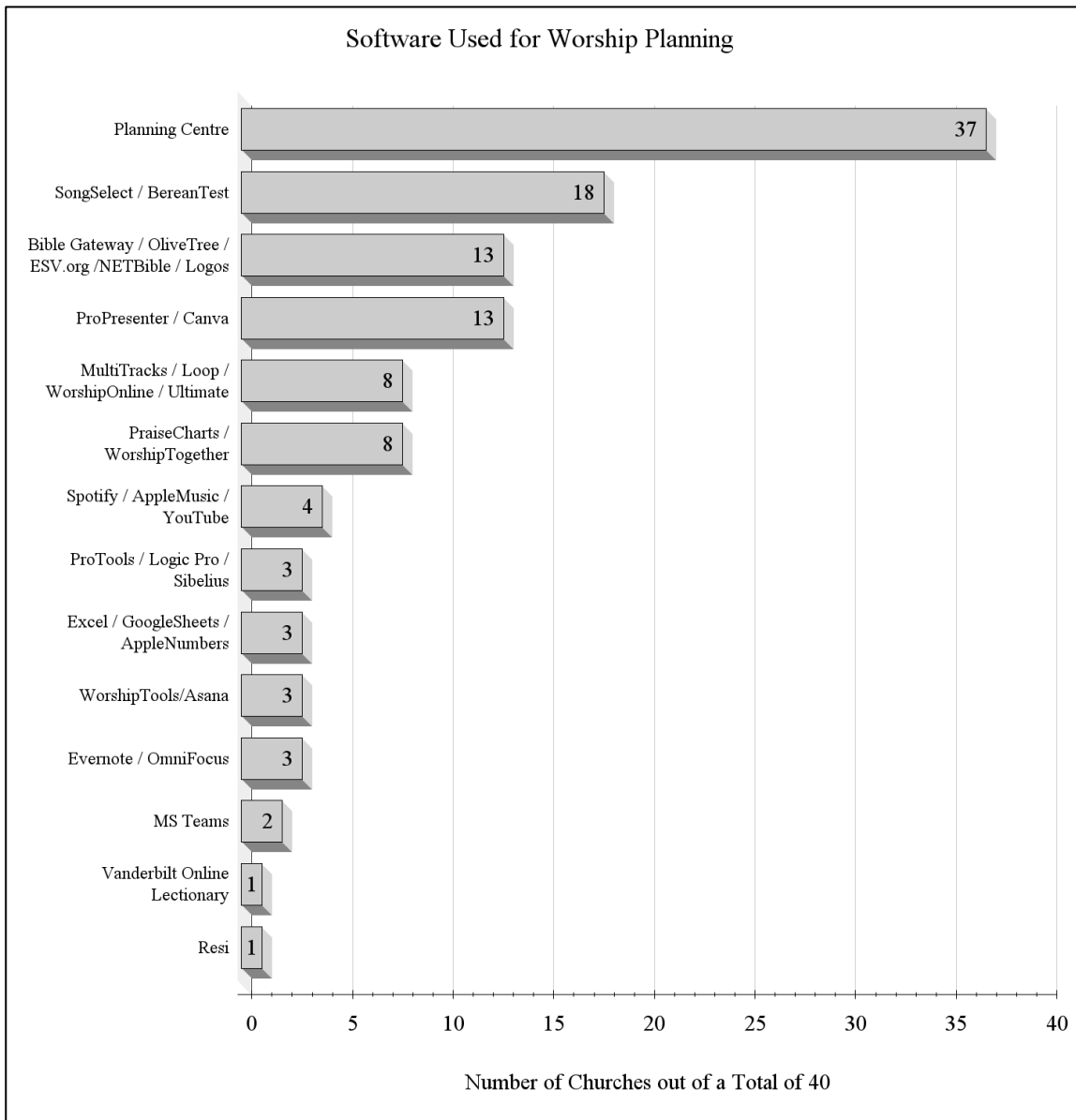


Figure 24. Software and online resources for service planning

Planning Center Online (PCO) was the clear favorite, used by thirty-seven of forty worship pastors. SongSelect (by CCLI) was another common resource, indicated by

seventeen churches.<sup>31</sup> Thirteen leaders specified using some form of online Bible in their planning, the vast majority referenced BibleGateway. Twelve worship pastors identified ProPresenter as a key resource for planning.

A couple of churches surveyed admitted they do not use digital tools for worship. One music director writes,

I intentionally don't use digital tools with the goal of encouraging musicianship within my teams. Ex. If we don't have a bass player... instead of subbing in (no pun intended) a bass track, we change the arrangement to fit the band without bass. Ex. We don't use click tracks because I would rather the band learn to listen and feel each other's playing styles to move the music along organically (also... we do a lot of time changes within our set lists, and I don't want to spend my time mapping out digital click track roadmaps!)

I find it interesting that the majority of the churches surveyed use backing tracks. I have found that using click tracks tends to strengthen a band's timing and unity. However, I also know the freedom that comes with playing to each other rather than to a click. This sense of playing "organically" as the quote above mentions, is being lost in the highly structured musical environment many churches foster. Another worship pastor testifies, "We don't use a click or backing tracks. We have had some pianists use Ableton, but we have a Rhodes, Hammond, grand piano and, Yamaha CP4 so most of the sounds we want we make live."

I appreciate the purposeful manner these leaders have thought through a philosophy of worship ministry and developed methodology accordingly. Still, the majority of worship pastors in Canada's larger churches have embraced modern technology in both planning and leading corporate worship.

### **Leadership: Interviews**

I asked two main leadership questions of the interviewees. The first was about

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<sup>31</sup> One church indicated they utilize Berean Test, a website providing song lyric analysis. <https://www.thebereantest.com>.

leadership development; the second asked their best practices about fostering multi-ethnic and/or multi-generational worship gatherings. These ideas would help fulfill one of the main purposes of this study, namely, strengthening my understanding and skill in spearheading the worship ministry department of our church.

The development of new leaders is a constant requirement in a larger church. Congregations need vocalists, instrumentalists, tech people, worship administrators, graphic designers, actors, stagehands, worship leaders, and many more. The list of leadership roles is as diverse as the liturgical creativity in a church. The interviewees provided helpful best practice details, specifically about raising up new worship leaders. Farley relates that his greatest pool from which to draw new leaders is the youth group in their church. He says,

For us it is a way to see which kids have more skill or not, and which have the skills to lead. Once we identify them [potential worship leaders], the way we train them is assembling all the worship leaders together once per month. We actually plan all our Sunday worship gatherings together, in a collegial way. . . . For me this is a setting to train those worship leaders and to give them theological insight into why we choose certain songs and not others. We talk about team dynamics and service themes. This is my way of training new leaders.<sup>32</sup>

Keith Sparrow says he is always “on the lookout for worshippers.” Sparrow looks at those already on the worship team to see if anyone is on a path of growth. He will ask the person, “Can you lead a song on Sunday? Can you lead in prayer? Can you read a Scripture?” Once they have done this a few times, Sparrow will determine if there is gifting to lead worship. Then they are invited to lead a full Sunday service. Sparrow tries to spend time with these potential leaders, helping them make proper song choices, from the practicalities of choosing the right keys to developing a story within the songs, leading people on a logical liturgical journey. He always tries to have one to three people in this form of discipleship track toward worship leadership.

Johnny Markin views worship leadership development as a graded activity.

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<sup>32</sup> Alex Farley, interview with the author, February 13, 2023.



Markin and his worship assistant endeavor to identify youth and young adults who are showing skill and spiritual passion in their generational programs, then intentionally bring them along on a discipleship path. They invite these young musicians to occasional worship conferences to expose them to new ideas and solid biblical grounding in the role of a worship leader.

Much more could be shared from the other interviewees. However, it is evident that Canadian worship pastors value training the next generation in leading corporate worship. These pastors do this largely through intentional, one-on-one coaching and mentoring, usually focusing on the young and helping them grow.

The final interview question was about best practices in fostering multi-generational or multi-ethnic ministry. Even though this question broke the “double barrel” rule, it was intentionally two-pronged.<sup>33</sup> I knew that by asking how churches encourage involvement by kids, youth, and adults, as well as people of different ethnic backgrounds in main worship services, much data would be gathered. Worship pastors need to be convictional in terms of how, or if, to mix various ages in the gathered church. They also need to determine how the view of multinational worship (Rev 7:9) should inform how to plan services.

From Bethany Missionary Church in St Catharines, Ontario, Laura Huh fostered a mini choir of youth as a way of getting high schoolers involved. At the releasing of Elevation’s “Rhythms” album, Huh had an epiphany that each generation has its own sound of music. She struggled with the question, “Can we worship with this new music?” Worship pastors must be open to exploring the morphing of music such that kids, youth, and young adults feel engaged and valued.

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<sup>33</sup> “The double-barrel question, also known as a double-direct question, is basically a trick question. (Or, if you are feeling fancy, an informal fallacy). It is when respondents are asked for feedback on two different issues or topics within one question. Since they can only respond with a single answer, the results will end of skewed.” Abigail Matsumoto, “The Double-Barreled Question and Other Common Survey Mistakes,” SurveyMonkey.com, accessed October 4, 2023, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/curiosity/double-barrel-survey-question/>.

Jeff Kendrick, Pastor of Worship and Creative Arts at Mission City Bible Church in Brantford, Ontario, referenced graded worship expression where kids, youth, young adults, and adults each had their own system of worship teams. Once or twice per year, Mission City brought all the ages together in their main services. Most of the time, however, the children had their own targeted programming. Regarding ethnic ministry, Kendrick admitted that until recently, Brantford had been a very white culture. In the last two years, Kendrick estimated that the church had moved from 99 percent Caucasian to 75 percent. At time of writing, the church included one quarter from visible minorities. This was a monumental shift in ecclesial culture, one that the church leadership was trying to foster and learn from.

Marc Jolicoeur, from New Brunswick, described their journey toward multi-ethnic ministry:

I had a great system. Just push play. Oh, you want to be part of a worship team? Go to the website. Go here. Do this. And then it became clear that if you were not a native-born Anglophile, that it was not easy to go through a text-based system. So I said, “This requires extra effort, but it’s worth the extra effort because we want our platform to actually look like our community.” And I think we have been moderately, if not quite successful in making our platform look like our congregation and community in both gender and ethnicity.<sup>34</sup>

Jolicoeur explained that his church fostered worship training a various levels but admitted a struggle in the main services. The required level of proficiency limited involvement to seasoned players, at least high school or higher. This created a gap in the younger generations at full-church gatherings. Jolicoeur also referenced a gap on the other end, where worship musicians self-selected themselves off the team when they felt they were too old.

Cliff Cline, of Oakville, Ontario, celebrated that God had created their church to be “more ethnically diverse” than their community. Forty-five percent of those serving on stage at Hope Bible Church were non-white. Cline says,

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<sup>34</sup> Marc Jolicoeur, interview with the author, March 13, 2023.

After that, it is just about who shows up and can do what they do. It's organic. You can tap someone on the shoulder but if they can't sing or they can't play, it doesn't matter. . . . We probably talk about this monthly. Is there a way we could do something, you know, Jamaican? Nope! I don't think we can pull that off. We just don't have the musicians in house to pull that off at this point. But if the Lord brings them, we would use them for sure.<sup>35</sup>

In summary, larger churches in Canada desire to invest in and foster multi-generational and multi-ethnic worship, however there are challenges to each. Age-targeted ministry usually works best—especially for elementary aged children. Most worship pastors surveyed try to involve all ages in main service worship at select events during the year, but most of the time, kids and occasionally youth enjoy separate programming. Fostering multi-ethnic worship also presents a challenge in that Canadian free churches are predominantly rooted in modern worship music style. Although many churches have welcomed dozens of nationalities, their music remains largely Western. Canadian worship pastors desire to involve believers from other countries but this usually happens in ways other than in music.

### **Conclusion**

The survey and interview protocol gathered helpful best practice data from forty worship pastors of Canada's larger churches. Information regarding demographics, theology, discipleship, artistry, and leadership, was analyzed and summarized to strengthen my leadership skills, encourage my home church, and resource the broader Canadian church, all for the glory of God and the increase of his kingdom.

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<sup>35</sup> Cliff Cline, interview with the author, February 16, 2023.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

The impetus for this project came at the end of twenty-one years of ministry as worship pastor at West Highland Baptist Church in Hamilton, Ontario. The church needed better artistic creativity and stronger leadership development. Some of the challenges were based on my abilities, or lack thereof, as worship pastor. I needed fresh skills to lead and cast vision before hundreds of musicians, actors, tech people, and other creative leaders.

When my family moved from Hamilton during my third year of doctoral work, and I began ministry at Emmanuel Church, Barrie, this project expanded to take on a more national focus. The context for this project was rooted in my time on staff at West Highland Church, however, the knowledge gained would benefit not only West Highland worship leaders, but also those in Emmanuel and in other churches across the country.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this research project was to discover best practices among worship pastors of Canadian churches with an attendance of at least six hundred in four categories: theology, discipleship, artistry, and leadership.<sup>1</sup> The work did not end with collecting survey data. I intended to use the data collected to encourage advancement among West Highland and Emmanuel leaders and also benefit my own pastoral ministry as well as leaders in similar roles at other churches.

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin J. Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), 14.

## **The Strengths of the Purpose Statement**

The purpose of gathering best practice ideas from other worship pastors was meant to tackle my deficiencies. Wisdom is found in “those who take advice” (Prov 13:10) and “iron sharpens iron” (Prov 27:17). Answers could be found by consulting one or two other worship directors. However, Solomon writes, “Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed (Prov 15:22). So, I contacted a large group of peers.

The purpose statement, “Discovering ministry best practices among worship pastors of Canadian churches with an attendance of at least six hundred,” was effective for three reasons. First, the amount of helpful data has shown the large peer group survey to be a wise move. I could have polled a select few other local worship pastors in Ontario and gained some insight into their style of leadership, discipleship, artistry, and theology. However, the small amount of data collected would have limited effectiveness. By surveying forty pastors across Canada from many different denominations, I was blessed with robust quantitative information and pages of helpful ministry ideas.

Second, the nation-wide scope provided a manageable pool of worship pastors. Focusing on the Canadian worship scene made sense as this has been my ministry locale for over two decades. To my knowledge, no such worship pastor research has been done in this nation. I could have expanded the research to include churches from the United States as well. However, I would have been faced with an impossible task of identifying countless evangelical groups in two countries, and thousands of potential churches larger than six hundred in attendance. Collecting data on this scale would be beneficial but would be best done by a para-church organization with the time, resources, connections, and manpower required. Evangelical churches the right size in Canada was a manageable list; one I was able to compile with a reasonable amount of research. Sample size was a strength.

Third, restricting the survey to churches larger than six hundred narrowed the focus. Canada has thousands of churches smaller than six hundred; each with musicians

and leadership who would benefit from this project data. However, I needed ministry practice wisdom from worship pastors in churches of similar size to mine or larger. A volunteer worship leader in a church of sixty people has a very different set of joys, struggles, and expectations than a full-time worship pastor in a multi-staff church of 1,000. Setting a project limiter of churches over six hundred in attendance provided me with a helpful group of peers from whom to garner ministry best practice ideas.

### **Benefits of the Rationale**

The rationale for this project was based upon challenges in my personal leadership and in my local church. As the project began, two problems were shown. First, a “tyranny of the urgent” caused me to make decisions from expediency, not long-range planning. I needed time to think, dream, pray, and plan. This three-year project forced me to tackle this very issue. I benefited greatly from the systematic way the DEdMin program and this research project provided structure for me to think long-term. In year one, I considered the needs of my church and my leadership, wrote a history of the church and context for the project. I then identified a few challenges I was facing and crafted measurable goals to address the problems. In the following two years, I discovered what the Bible and popular literature had to say about my role as worship pastor. All of this helped me to break out of the “tyranny of the urgent,” to research best practice wisdom from other churches, and then to implement some of these ideas into my long-range planning.

This first benefit of the rationale was clear when the Lord called me to leave West Highland and become the worship pastor at Emmanuel Barrie. As I transitioned to the new church, it was even more crucial that I had the skills necessary to dream, think, pray, and plan for the long-term health of the ministry. At the time of writing, I am eight months into my new role in Barrie. I have already met one-on-one with most of the worship team and audio team members to understand their stresses and successes and to

hear their ideas for the ministry. I have hosted two worship and audio team vision-casting meetings where, based on their feedback, I have communicated plans on ways we can move forward together.

The rationale for this project was grounded in a second problem: the weekly grind of ministry had produced myopic thinking in me. Rather than drawing from the experiential wealth of other congregations, my focus stayed within the walls of my own church. I needed to break from the shackles of always doing the same things in the same ways in ministry. The rationale produced the need for, and incredible benefit of, gaining best practice wisdom from other worship pastors.

For example, after two decades of leadership at West Highland, I was actually failing in vision casting and motivational leadership. These areas were very weak. Ken Dosso of Lethbridge Evangelical Free Church provided a brilliant idea. He gathers all musicians, tech people, and service speakers for a pre-service meeting each Sunday. During this meeting, Dosso walks through the service order to clarify roles, responsibilities, and timing, reiterates encouragement and vision for the group, and directs a time of prayer. This is a key opportunity for team motivation and a heart-check for all involved. At the time of writing, I have already incorporated this best practice idea into my local church.

Marc Jolicoeur of Moncton, New Brunswick, shared another best practice—glimpses of his own vision casting and motivational leadership. First, he combines the training of his worship leaders with small group discipleship. Jolicoeur meets with his leaders once per month to grow in relationship, doctrine, and skill together. Second, Jolicoeur assigns a leader to each instrumental section (e.g., drummers, electric guitarists) to coach and encourage the rest of the players. These are ways Jolicoeur casts vision and brings his leaders along in the future of the ministry. His leadership incorporates much more than simply leading singing on a Sunday morning. Jolicoeur intentionally cares for, disciples, and motivates his people toward an exciting future. I am learning from these

kinds of best practices.

Figure 24 on page 118 exemplifies another benefit in its demographic data regarding software and online resources used in service planning. A worship pastor struggling with myopism in creativity, especially in service planning, can utilize ideas from this graph. This second rationale, then, to free me from being limited by always doing things the same way was a great benefit.

### **Strengths of the Project**

The completion of this project has shown three key strengths. First, contacting forty of Canada's worship pastors provided a statistically viable sample size. By limiting church size to those greater than six hundred in attendance, the number of potential churches in Canada was also limited. Whereas the United States is known for its mega churches with over 10,000 in weekly worship,<sup>2</sup> only three Canadian churches are in the range of 5,000.<sup>3</sup>

By contacting denominational offices of most evangelical groups in Canada, those with ministry style intentionally similar to that of West Highland, I was able to develop a list of sixty-nine churches larger than six hundred. Limiting the study pool to evangelical churches with modern worship style was important in order to provide me with helpful best practice information. This list was not exhaustive but certainly included the majority of qualified Canadian churches. Obtaining ministry wisdom from forty of the sixty-nine qualifying churches across the country, from fourteen separate

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<sup>2</sup> The Hartford Institute for Religion Research conducted a study in 2020, showing over 1,750 churches in the United States larger than 2,000 in attendance. Warren Bird and Scott Thumma, *Mega Church 2020: The Changing Reality in America's Largest Churches* (Hartford, CT: The Hartford Institute for Religion Research, 2020), [http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/2020\\_Megachurch\\_Report.pdf](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/2020_Megachurch_Report.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> The Hartford Institute keeps a list of Canadian churches in the range of 2,000 attendees or greater. This pre-pandemic list includes thirty-five churches, only three of which are over 5,000. The largest church is registered as 8,000 in weekly attendance. Hartford Institute for Religion Research, "Megachurches of Canada," accessed October 4, 2023, <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/canadian-megachurches.html>.



denominations, and seven out of ten provinces, provided a reasonable sample size from a significant cross section of Canadian evangelicalism.

Second, utilizing Kevin Navarro's four categories of theology, discipleship, artistry, and leadership in *The Complete Worship Leader* provided a systematic way of assessing the best practices.<sup>4</sup> Navarro's work provided a starting point for thinking through the best practice areas, and I was able to utilize prior published research rather than starting from scratch.

Third, another strength of the project was the potential ministry benefit this best practice wisdom could provide to others. As surveys and interviews were completed, many respondents expressed their interest in the findings. I knew that the information collected would not only encourage my ministry but also that of my peers across Canada.<sup>5</sup>

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

Although I was able to accomplish the goals of surveying and interviewing a collection of worship pastors from across Canada and gathering their ministry best practice ideas, there were challenges. One weakness was my move from Hamilton to Barrie. The initial purpose was to create positive change in the West Highland Church, but, because I was no longer in Hamilton, the direct connection between this study and the needs of the church was not guaranteed. However, the same needs were found at Emmanuel as at West Highland.

A second weakness was the survey sample. I tried to secure respondents from every Canadian province but was only able to receive surveys from seven out of ten

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<sup>4</sup> Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader*, 14.

<sup>5</sup> Time will tell if this is true when the post-project podcasts are aired, and the project data is made accessible to the public.

provinces.<sup>6</sup> Churches larger than six hundred were not found and/or worship pastors were unwilling to participate from Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland, as well as

Table 2. Canadian province and territory population

Province	Population	Included in the Survey?	Total Population of Surveyed Provinces	Percentage of Total Country
Ontario	14,223,942	yes	14,223,942	38.5
Quebec	8,501,833	yes	8,501,833	23.0
British Columbia	5,000,879	yes	5,000,879	13.5
Alberta	4,262,635	yes	4,262,635	11.5
Manitoba	1,342,153	yes	1,342,153	3.6
Saskatchewan	1,132,505	no		
Nova Scotia	969,383	no		
New Brunswick	775,610	yes	775,610	2.1
Newfoundland	510,550	no		
Prince Edward Island	154,331	yes	154,331	0.4
Northwest Territories	41,070	no		
Yukon	40,232	no		
Nunavut	36,858	no		
<b>Canada</b>	<b>36,991,981</b>		<b>34,261,383</b>	<b>92.6%</b>

the three arctic territories. This encompasses a massive percentage of the land of Canada not represented in this project. However, in terms of population, the seven provinces

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<sup>6</sup> These included British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island.

included in the survey represent 92.6 percent of the country.<sup>7</sup>

A third weakness of this project related to the first weakness. The first weakness was the uncertain benefit of the survey results to West Highland Church after my exit from the staff. I anticipated another weakness in this project's benefit to other worship pastors. This project included a significant survey protocol of forty pastors and an interview process among eight of the same leaders. This project also included preparing a series of six podcast manuscripts, summarizing and unveiling the results of the study.

However, this project did not include the recording, editing, and publishing of the podcasts. A weakness, then, is that the automatic and immediate application of this work was solely to my own leadership, and by extension to Emmanuel Church. In my mind, a major outcome of this research project was to bring best practice wisdom to bear not just to my own life but also to the forty worship pastors who filled out the survey as well as numerous other church music leaders in Canada. This research project was strong but perhaps only encompassed part one of the ultimate dream of strengthening the church in Canada. The incompleteness of this desire caused me to consider this a weakness of the project.<sup>8</sup>

### **What I Would Do Differently**

There are three things that I would do differently if I were given the opportunity. First, I would pay more careful attention to the numeric goals. I included several measurables to ensure success. I was to *identify* at least forty Canadian churches larger than six hundred and *survey* at least thirty of them. Unfortunately, I did not pay

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<sup>7</sup> These statistics come from the 2021 census. Statistics Canada, "Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population," last modified March 29, 2023, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E&HPA=1>.

<sup>8</sup> At the time of writing, I fully intend to complete the podcasts and let other worship pastors share in the best practice data I was able to gather.

close consideration of this goal and I surveyed all forty worship pastors. Although this oversight created a stronger sample size, it caused stress and a much longer implementation period than necessary.

Second, I would be more exact in saving my work and transferring files from one computer to another. Even though the Southern Writing Center and my supervisor were of phenomenal help in terms of grammar, punctuation, and other formatting issues, I still made numerous errors along the way, causing aggravation and duplication of work. A major part of this was caused by constantly working on various iterations of the project paper—versions on my laptop, on my desktop computer, and on Google Docs. These were easily confused. Once I received information from my supervisor, I needed to make sure I edited the right version of the paper and that I did not lose any new work. I failed in this organization once or twice, thereby wasting considerable time.

Third, I would study how to correctly create and format charts and graphs *before* adding them to the paper. Unfortunately, I ended up re-creating and re-uploading twenty-six tables and figures at least five times each until they were displayed correctly in the paper. This procedural error caused me to design the equivalent of 130 figures rather than twenty-six! The amount of wasted time was staggering. Given the chance to begin again, I would carefully consult the SBTS Writing Center videos and articles to learn how to format the figures before I started.

### **Theological Reflections**

After spending three years on this project, I was encouraged by how the Scriptures exegeted in chapter 2 impact the conclusion of this study. The following are some theological reflections on 1 Chronicles 15–16, Acts 2, Colossians 3, 2 Timothy 2, and 2 Timothy 4.

#### **1 Chronicles 15–16**

As the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem, David said, “You and

your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and bring up the ark of the Lord” (1 Chr 15:12). Furthermore, he lamented that “we did not inquire of him [God] about how to do it in the prescribed way” (15:13). After the disastrous results of carelessly disregarding the Word of God, leading to the death of Uzzah (13:10), David led the Levites differently the second time they moved the ark. In a sense, here we see the pastoral heart of David. Even as king, he disciplined the Levitical servants along godly paths by directing them to God’s commands. This is part of the task of every worship pastor—to consistently direct people to God’s revealed Word.

First Chronicles 15–16 shows the management of David. Several components of his character and leadership can be utilized by worship pastors. Those who hold a pastoral role in worship and music should lead people to the Word of God, organize artists for worship duties, and lead corporate praise gatherings. First Chronicles 15–16 provides an Old Testament theological underpinning for the multi-faceted role of worship pastor.

These aspects of worship leadership were clearly seen in those I surveyed. When asked about their personal walk with the Lord, most of the pastors pointed to daily time in the Word and prayer. As they model what it means to live life grounded in the Word, they naturally direct artists and tech people with whom they work to do the same.

It was fascinating to read of the worship service detailed in 1 Chronicles 16 and compare this to what we experience in corporate praise today. This ancient gathering referenced a tent/building (16:1), offerings (16:1), a blessing (16:2), food (16:3), multi-gender worship (16:3), musician roles (16:4–6), various instruments (16:5–6), song-writing (16:7), a new song (16:8–36), corporate response of “amen” (16:36), musician scheduling (16:37–41), greeters (16:42b), and dismissal (16:43). These are some of the very responsibilities tasked to worship pastors in today’s context.

Although I did not survey the Canadian worship pastors regarding their use of each of these specific aspects of corporate worship from 1 Chronicles 16, some of these

characteristics were evident in the data. David appointed Asaph and his associates to lead out in singing the new song recorded in 1 Chronicles 16:8–36. Ninety percent of those I consulted have a system in place for introducing new songs to their congregations. David assigned musicians with specific roles (1 Chr 16:4–6) and scheduled them (16:37–41). Modern worship directors do the same. In fact, 85 percent of those surveyed have a system in place for raising up, training, and scheduling new worship leaders.

Davidic worship includes more than just voices; it includes instruments. First Chronicles 16:5–6 incorporates most of the families of instruments through lyres, harps, cymbals, and trumpets. The leaders in my nationwide study clearly emphasized both vocal and instrumental music. Thirty-seven and thirty-nine out of forty churches offered youth and adult worship teams respectively. These labels assume instrumentation because “choir” was a separate category in the study. Just over 50 percent of churches offered adult choir with a small number offering kids or youth choirs. Seven out of the forty churches also offered orchestral ministry. The more I read passages like 1 Chronicles 16 the more I am inspired by David’s masterful management of worship ministry. I am convicted that I serve in a long line of musical leaders responsible for fostering acceptable worship of the Lord.

## **Acts 2**

In Acts 2:42, the infant Christian church is described as devoted to four elements: the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. Although Acts 2:44–47 describes the kind of Christian community the believers enjoyed, I chose to focus specifically on verse 42 because of its application to corporate worship. There were no survey questions about the Lord’s Table, however, there were connections to the other three elements. The apostles’ teaching relates to the Word of God, to the gospel of Christ, to the message of the Messiah; the very things the apostles wrote about in the New Testament. In Acts 2, John records that the early church was devoted to this “teaching.”

This “devotion” implies a commitment to theology and doctrine. With an average of 4.9 out of 5.0, the forty pastors in my survey registered strong support for this statement, “Theological/doctrinal growth as a worship leader is crucial for faithful ministry.” Several music pastors commented that they take their role of guarding song theology seriously. This ensures that the apostles’ teaching is clearly upheld through spoken word and through singing. It is important that lead/preaching pastors are not the only ones to guard the doctrine of local churches. Those I surveyed and interviewed agree that music pastors also have a role in “guarding the good deposit” (2 Tim 1:14).

Johnny Markin described an extensive commitment to incorporate the whole counsel of God in service planning,

We do some complementary readings in the fashion of the classic lectionary where the four texts all meld together and then the homily is to link them all together. We kind of start in a different direction where we'll take his [the pastor's] preaching passage if he's in a book and then look for a complimentary passage to read mid-service during the songs, or early part of the call to worship, and then moving into the section of the Word, and then respond in song to that Word. If he's preaching New Testament, we'll read Old Testament, and vice versa. It takes a lot more planning from our point of view and going back and forth. But what we're trying to do is cover the whole council of God, both testaments.<sup>9</sup>

I really appreciate Markin’s commitment to the Bible in his service planning. Speaking from personal experience, I can easily spend most of my time preparing, rehearsing, and leading music, with a much smaller percentage of time organizing Scripture readings. If Isaiah 40:8 is true, that “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the Word of our God endures forever,” I need to be more “devoted” to the apostles’ teaching—the eternal Word of God—and less consumed by modern song lyrics of human origin.

Another service element from Acts—the fellowship—refers to the community of believers that one aligns with. Several respondents alluded to “fellowship.” Pastor Alex Farley demonstrated his heart for the believers by saying,

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<sup>9</sup> Johnny Markin, interview with the author, February 9, 2023.

It is not just about playing music together, about a job. It is more like a vision for growing as disciples together. When you serve together, conflict arises. How are you going to manage conflict and resolve it? This is all part of a vision to pastor these people, to learn better ways to reconcile, to navigate conflict, jealousy. These are all pastoral opportunities.<sup>10</sup>

Farley reflected a desire to foster true *koinōnia*, not just artistic excellence. The data collected showed this to be a common theme among Canadian worship pastors. Another pastor required a commitment to the fellowship in those being considered as worship leaders, “Before anyone is considered for this position, they must demonstrate a participation in church life off the stage. This means regular attendance, participation in a life group, involvement in our anchor causes etc.” Although this leader did not define “anchor causes,” whatever these “anchor causes” were, it is clear this church expects its leaders to “devote themselves to. . . the fellowship” (Acts 2:42).

As I reflect on this “fellowship” theme, I realize its unpopularity in many circles today. It seems there is less commitment to joining in church membership now than in past generations. When they are dissatisfied with their current congregation, people easily “church hop” until they find a new place to attend. The label “big B Baptist” is a derogatory term referring to those who are thought to love their Baptist group so much they believe all other denominations are at most heretical, or at least in error. However, just like in marriage where I need to be more devoted to my wife, not less, the same is true in the church. Acts 2 reminds me it is crucial that those I serve with at Emmanuel be truly committed to the fellowship, the local expression of the Bride of Christ called Emmanuel Barrie.

The final service element from Acts 2, prayer, was also evident in the best practice responses. All eight of those who were interviewed expressed a personal commitment to daily prayer as an ingredient to a healthy devotional walk with the Lord. Prayer was referenced as key to corporate health as well. Jeff Kendrick claimed that their

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<sup>10</sup> Alex Farley, interview with the author, February 13, 2023.



worship team members do not pick up their instruments until they have first spent time in prayer. Sometimes this takes a full hour at the start of a midweek rehearsal.

As we moved to Barrie, the phrase from Acts 2 “they devoted themselves to . . . prayer” moved my heart. I felt convicted to foster prayer in worship team ministry at Emmanuel Church. Although prayer was a regular part of rehearsals at West Highland, reading the survey respondents’ commitment to prayer renewed in me a desire to likewise be “devoted” to prayer in my new setting.

### **Colossians 3**

Worship pastors who fulfill their biblical mandate of leadership in Christ’s church must be involved in the three imperatives in Colossians 3:16, letting the message of Christ dwell, singing to one another, and teaching/admonishing one another. These are required of all believers. However, I chose to connect this verse to a worship pastor’s role because the scriptural setting is corporate worship. The “message of Christ” grounds our teaching and admonishing, which is done through singing “songs, hymns, and spiritual songs.” All of these tasks are grounded in thankful worship directed to the Father and empowered by the Son (3:16–17).

Those surveyed expressed a common commitment to the message of Christ, to staying personally and corporately robust in theology. Letting the message of Christ dwell within was also seen in the respondents’ desire of discipling others—bringing the Word of God to the lives of the musicians and tech people in their churches. One worship pastor wrote, “Colossians 3:14–17 helps me remember that singing songs together is a powerful way to teach one another the wisdom of the Word of God and not just an icebreaker or time filler. We should also be singing different forms and styles of music all centered in the Word of God and biblically sound.”

The biblical concept of “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” causes debate among church musicians and theologians. Regardless of how one interprets these terms,

the apostle Paul teaches a varied approach to music in the gathered church. Perhaps psalms were sung with ancient Jewish musical style while hymns took on the flavors of modern Greek culture. Does the triple term in Colossians 3:16 indicate variety of genre or lyric? In any case, this text provides rationale for exploring diversity in church song.

Many of those surveyed lamented the homogeneous nature of modern worship. Much of current repertoire sounds the same. A few leaders desired to foster musical expression from cultures other than white North America. Incorporating flavors of jazz, blues, gospel, and country would bring variety to worship in Canada's larger churches. A few of those surveyed expressed a desire to be involved in songwriting to create new songs for the church. This would fulfill the mandate of Psalm 33:3, "Sing to him a new song" as well as the implied mandate of Colossians 3:16.

Beyond genre, the modern church is also missing the lyrical diversity we see in the psalms. For example, where are the laments of today? It is common to find lyrical themes like "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth" (Ps 8:1), but exceedingly rare to find a song like Psalm 13, "How long, O Lord, will you forget me forever?" Another rare theme in our songs is the topic of suffering. One worship pastor I surveyed writes: "Job [chapter] 1 is a great example of Job worshipping the Lord in the midst of intense suffering. Not because the music was great, but because he knew that God is to be worshipped, period." Colossians 3 hints at both stylistic and thematic variety in church song. Today's worship pastors have a role to play in bringing this variety to their congregants, facilitating praise of the One who is worthy.

## **2 Timothy 2 and 4**

In 2 Timothy 2, the apostle Paul lays out a simple yet profound philosophy of leadership multiplication. This mandate of "entrusting" gospel ministry to others does not only relate to preachers. Worship pastors have the same 2 Timothy 2:2 responsibility. Yet, by nature of their expertise and hiring, worship pastors can be tempted to place too much

leadership responsibility on their own shoulders. It is a fallacy that the professional training of a church staff member in charge of music makes them the only one suited for active ministry. Lay leadership must be developed.

Dozens of survey respondents shared their technique for raising up the next generation of worship leaders. For instance, Jeff Kendrick of Mission City Bible Church in Brantford, Ontario, referenced the process of spiritual growth within a small group context. When Kendrick sees that a person is not only growing in musical and production skill but also in heart, an intentional push toward leadership can begin. In this way, Kendrick follows Paul’s instruction to seek “qualified” people with whom to entrust gospel ministry. The majority of those surveyed expressed a similar passion for developing and discipling new leadership.

Keith Sparrow of Forward Church in Cambridge, Ontario, looked for worshippers before skill. He related, “When somebody approaches me, interested in joining the worship team, the first thing I do is look at them in a service. I’m looking at their face. If they are not engaged in worship, how can they lead people in worship too? For those on our worship teams, I am looking to see if there is space for them to grow.”<sup>11</sup> A team member reading Scripture, leading in prayer, or leading a song encourages growth with pastoral coaching.<sup>12</sup> Sparrow clearly connected the 2 Timothy 2:2 expectations of “reliable” and “qualified” people in his approach to finding new leaders.

Another Canadian worship pastor wrote, “We have a ‘worship leader’s lead team’ that is responsible for the care and leading of our music team. Every worship leader is met with one-on-one for discipleship and leadership coaching.” Again, notice that this pastor designed a system with spiritual and leadership growth in mind. Paul counsels Timothy to entrust ministry responsibility to reliable, competent, and teachable people.

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<sup>11</sup> Keith Sparrow, interview with the author, January 30, 2023.

<sup>12</sup> Two excellent quotes regarding worship leadership training can be found on page 113.

Paul expects a certain level of spiritual maturity in his terms “reliable” and “qualified.”

One aspect of 2 Timothy 2:2 caused me concern in terms of survey responses. The underlying yet unspecified topic of “the things you have heard me say” is the gospel. Paul’s teaching primarily revolves around the gospel of Christ and its impact on all areas of life. Assuming “gospel” in the 2 Timothy term “things” adds weight to the calling of pastors to raise up other leaders. These recruits are not just to stack chairs, photocopy curriculum, or move audio faders; these new leaders are to be involved in the greatest ministry of all—receiving and passing on the gospel. When asked to describe how they equip new worship leaders, not one of the forty respondents mentioned the gospel as their motivation or goal. Granted, the question on how to train worship leaders likely led those surveyed to respond about methodology, not motivation. This is understandable. However, I raise this concern as I know how easy it is to diligently fill band roles in a worship team schedule, successfully find chord charts, and arrange song sets, but lose sight of the glory of “the things you have heard me say” (the gospel) in the midst of the work. I need to remember that this is my primary calling—to share, speak, sing, and pray the gospel.

However, when asked to explain their favorite worship-related Scripture, a few pointed to the gospel. One person referenced 2 Corinthians 4:16–18 and wrote, “The church has a mission to spread the gospel, in words and deeds. Jesus is the hope for a hopeless world.” Another pastor referenced Deuteronomy 6:4–9 and wrote, “Our worship ministry mission statement is: Draw full attention to Christ, fostering heartfelt worship in response to His glory. Our first calling as worship leaders is to place our teams’ attention and our congregation’s attention on the full work of God the Father, Son and Spirit. Worship is a response of the heart to the glorious nature of our Creator and the gospel of Jesus.” These are positive examples of Canadian worship pastors who use Scripture to teach and pass on the gospel.

In 2 Timothy 4 Paul again returns to the theme of leadership development, this

time about the character of a faithful leader. Paul writes, “But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (2 Tim 4:5). Earlier in this paper I referred to four *marks* of leadership: stability, resilience, evangelism, and commitment. One of the ways that worship staff reflect stability, resilience, and commitment (three of the four marks above) is simply to serve in ministry long-term. Fifty percent of those surveyed have been serving in worship ministry longer than fifteen years. The top 15 percent have been serving for more than twenty-five years. Having started as a music pastor in 1998, I am privileged to be counted in this number. I pray I am marked by keeping stable in the midst of uncertain or stressful ministry, faithfully enduring hardship, reaching out to the lost for Christ, and completing God’s calling on my life.

First Chronicles 15–16, Acts 2, Colossians 3, and 2 Timothy 2 and 4 have encouraged my role of worship pastor and have been reflected in many of the responses by forty other worship pastors across Canada.

### **Personal Reflections**

This doctoral journey, which began over three years ago, has been arduous, seemingly endless, and yet incredibly affirming. Those whom I consulted before I started this degree each expressed the same thing—this will require a lot of work! The writing began as the world locked down in COVID. While uncertainty and fear took over the hearts of many, I had to look to the future with optimism and hopefulness. This was an challenging task that demanded much of my time and energy as well as the support and patience of my family. Staring at the expectations of writing a 150-page paper, while completing several seminars, and continuing in full-time pastoral ministry, was daunting to say the least. In the midst of this project, the move from Hamilton to Barrie brought more immense stress and work than I anticipated. Yet, God was faithful.

This journey also seemed endless. I experienced month after month of

thinking, writing, planning, writing, researching, and more writing. I devoted many weekends and weeknights to studying when I would have rather enjoyed the great outdoors. Yet, two cultural proverbs came to mind: “How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time,” and, “The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step.” With the Lord’s gracious hand, I was able to take one day at a time climbing this mountain called “doctoral research project.”

Finally, I reflect on how affirming this project has been to my faith and ministry calling. The privilege of serving at West Highland Church for over twenty-one years, and now Emmanuel Church, has been confirmed by interacting with forty peers across Canada. Even though this project was birthed in the ministry challenges laid out in the rationale (p. 6), it is clear God set in motion his strategic plan for endowing me with fresh vision, ideas, and encouragement as I move into the future. Proverbs 27:17 reads, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” This phrase hints at the pain and struggle of a knife blade on a grinder. However, this phrase also reads with the satisfaction and success of a properly sharpened edge. The process of surveying forty other worship pastors has been humbling as I was confronted with areas I need to grow in. Equally so, the camaraderie and wisdom of my peers has been life-giving. I now have a new toolbox of best practice ideas ready to implement. This project has not disheartened my resolve to serve the Lord through the arts but has affirmed my ministry calling which he birthed in me decades ago.

### **Conclusion**

The main purpose of this project, gathering best practice ministry ideas from worship pastors in Canadian churches larger than six hundred in attendance, has been fulfilled. The ultimate aims were to provide best practice wisdom to benefit West Highland Church in Hamilton, and Emmanuel Church, Barrie, to inspire growth in my own skills as a worship pastor, and finally to share the findings with my peers across

Canada. I look forward to sharing key insights with my former home church, my current church leadership, and with those who were part of the survey and interview process.

Already, the best practice findings have begun to benefit my own calling and abilities as a shepherd over the many artists, tech people, and other leaders in Emmanuel Church. May the Lord, the Sovereign over his Body, receive all the glory from this study, now and into the future.

## APPENDIX 1

### PODCAST MANUSCRIPT EVALUATION

Following the collection and synthesis of survey and interview material, I produced a series of six podcast manuscripts. After the completion of my degree program, these manuscripts will be used to produce video podcasts aimed to benefit worship leaders from my home church as well as worship pastors from other churches. These podcasts will share best practices wisdom from Canadian worship pastors who participated in the study. The following evaluation rubric was utilized by a panel of experts (a theologian, a Bible College professor of worship, and a seasoned worship pastor).



Name of Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Worship Pastor Podcasts - Manuscript Evaluation Tool</b>					
<b>1 = insufficient 2 = requires attention 3 = sufficient 4 = exemplary</b>					
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Biblical Accuracy</b>					
Biblical teaching is sound in its interpretation of Scripture.					
Each lesson is faithful to the theology of the Bible.					
<b>Scope</b>					
The content of the script sufficiently covers each issue it is designed to address.					
The curriculum sufficiently covers the major components of a worship pastor's role as outlined by Kevin Navarro (Theology, Discipleship, Artistry, Leadership).					
<b>Pedagogy</b>					
Each session teaching is clear, containing a big idea.					
Each episode provides logical connection to the preceding and subsequent podcast.					
The introduction provides a helpful summary of the podcast series, inspiring the watcher to return for part 2.					
The conclusion provides good synthesis and inspires the watcher to put lessons learned into practice.					
<b>Practicality</b>					
The manuscript clearly details good practices of Canadian worship pastors.					

The manuscript clearly details how to become a stronger theologian as a worship pastor.					
The manuscript clearly details how to engage in discipleship as a worship pastor.					
The manuscript clearly details ideas for artistry and creativity in worship ministry.					
The manuscript clearly details good practices for leadership development.					

Other Comments:

## APPENDIX 2

### WORSHIP PASTOR SURVEY

At the outset of this research project, I assembled a list of sixty-nine Canadian churches with over six hundred in attendance. From this list, forty worship pastors participated in the following mixed-methods survey. These survey questions were produced digitally using a Google Forms survey portal.

## WORSHIP PASTOR SURVEY

### Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to garner information on best practices in your role as worship pastor in your church. This research is being conducted by Lee Brubacher for the purposes of collecting data for a doctoral project. Information gathered from you and the entire group of worship pastors will be analyzed and summarized, and finally shared via educational podcasts. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential* as your name will not be identified with your responses. *Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.*

### Preamble

Identifying the various responsibilities of worship pastors can be a subjective pursuit from church to church. Writer Zac Hicks identifies sixteen foundational aspects to this role.<sup>1</sup> Song-writer Keith Getty asks ten probing questions of worship leaders.<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of the following survey, I am using author Kevin Navarro's simplified headings of: theologian, disciple, artist, leader.<sup>3</sup> Following the collection of simple demographic data, four subsequent sections will include questions based on Navarro's four-fold system, seeking good practices in your own ministry experience.

Thank you for participating in this uniquely Canadian study. I pray that this

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<sup>1</sup> Church Lover, Corporate Mystic, Doxological Philosopher, Disciple Maker, Prayer Leader, Theological Dietician, War General, Watchful Prophet, Missionary, Artist Chaplain, Caregiver, Mortician, Emotional Shepherd, Liturgical Architect, Curator, Tour Guide. Hicks, *The Worship Pastor*, Preamble.

<sup>2</sup> Keith Getty and Kristyn Getty, *Sing! How Worship Transforms Your Life, Family, and Church* (Nashville: B&H Books, 2017), 113–22.

Am I walking with the Lord? Am I in good relationship with my church leader(s)? Am I investing in relationships with my music team(s)? Am I choosing good songs? Am I committed to serving my congregation? Am I encouraging the congregational voice? Am I being myself rather than trying to be someone else? Am I mindful of the work of the Holy Spirit? Am I growing old gracefully? Am I walking with the Lord?

<sup>3</sup> Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader*, 14.

examination of ministry practices from coast to coast will benefit current and future worship leaders and bring glory to God.

*Lee Brubacher, Hamilton, Ontario*

## Part 1: Demographic Info

1. Please provide *only* the last 4 digits of your phone number: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Circle your age range.  

20s
30s
40s
50s
60s
70s
  
3. Indicate your education level. (*Check all that apply.*)  

*High School*  
 *College Diploma*

*Bachelor's Degree*  
 *Master's Degree*

*Doctoral Degree*
  
4. In which Canadian Province is your church located?  

BC
AB
SK
MB
ON
QC
NB
NS
  
5. How many years have you ministered as a worship pastor/director/leader? (*Indicate the total in years between all churches where you have served.*)  

0–5
5–10
10–15
15–20
20–25
25–30
30+
  
6. Circle the average weekly attendance of your church at in-person services (*All ages combined, assume pre-COVID numbers.*)  

600–700
700–800
800–900
900–1000
1000–1100
1100–1200
>1200
  
7. Identify the size (in IP addresses) of your weekly online audience (*i.e. those who watch the Sunday morning service from home.*)  

0–150
150–300
300–450
450–600
600–750
750–900
>900
  
8. Indicate the ministries your church offers. (*Circle all that apply*)  

Adult worship team/band	Orchestra	Online Broadcast
Youth worship team	Kids worship team	Radio/TV Broadcast
Adult Choir	Private Music/Arts Lessons	Social Media Podcasts
Kids Choir	Drum Line team	Musical Solos/Trios on Sunday
Youth Choir	Dance Ministry	Regional Concerts
Senior/Mature Adult Choir	Drama/Theatre	Leadership Training in the Arts
Audio Recording Projects	Video Recording Projects	Visual Art (Painting, etc.)

### Part 2: Theologian

Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. Theological/doctrinal growth as a worship leader is crucial for faithful ministry.					
2. Worship leaders must ensure sound theology in the songs they choose for corporate singing.					
3. Worship leaders should foster the use of Scripture in aspects of the service such as corporate prayer, the call to worship, and other Bible readings.					

1. Identify your top three Scriptures influencing worship ministry in the local church.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Choose one of the above three verses which is particularly meaningful and explain how it has impacted a theology of worship in your ministry.

### Part 3: Disciple

Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA
4. Practicing spiritual disciplines (such as prayer, Scripture memory, solitude, and more) is essential for longevity in church ministry.					
5. I enjoy intentionally discipling others in their faith.					
6. It is important that each leader is regularly disciplined by a more mature believer.					

1. How does worship ministry benefit from discipleship? In other words, what have you found works well in keeping your musicians, tech people, and artists, spiritually healthy?

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#### Part 4: Artist

	Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA
	7. I frequently practice my musical instrument in order to increase in my skills as an artist.					
	8. My church has a system in place for teaching new songs for corporate worship.					
	9. My church fosters the inclusion of visual arts in the ministry. (Ex. painting, sculpting, sketching)					

1. Describe how you grow in your own skills as a musician/artist?
2. How do you foster artistic creativity in your church?

#### Part 5: Leader

	Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA
	10. I enjoy auditioning new potential musicians for worship team.					
	11. My church has a process of equipping new worship leaders.					
	12. I utilize a system of volunteer appreciation.					
	13. I have a plan for personal leadership development (attending conferences, taking courses, etc)					
	14. My church utilizes scheduling and planning software such as “Planning Center Online”.					
	15. My ministry calling includes developing leaders in all areas of worship ministry (such as tech, drama, music, and more)					

1. Describe how you equip new worship leaders.
2. How do you show appreciation for your ministry volunteers?



3. What are your three most useful software programs in *planning* weekly services?  
(*Planning Center Online, Logos, SongSelect, BibleGateway, etc.*)
- a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_
4. If you use digital resources for “live” worship, what are your three favorite digital tools for corporate *worship leadership*? (*Ableton, Mainstage, MultiTracks, Other DAW, Other Click Source, Drum Loops, etc.*)  
(Leave blank if you do not use such tools)
- a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 3

### WORSHIP PASTOR INTERVIEW

Following the completion of surveys by at forty worship pastors, eight people from this same list of leaders were asked to participate in an interview. These interviews, conducted and recorded in-person or over Zoom, provided video footage which was used in the subsequent podcast series.

## WORSHIP PASTOR INTERVIEW

### **Preamble**

Thank you for being willing to participate in this interview as a follow-up to the survey you already submitted. I truly appreciate the time you have invested in this uniquely Canadian study. I would like to dive a little deeper regarding successes in your ministry role. Author Kevin Navarro has written a helpful book for church music practitioners called “The Complete Worship Leader.” In order to discover ministry ideas that work well among Canadian worship pastors, I will use Navarro’s four-fold categories of Theologian, Disciple, Artist, and Leader.

### **Theologian**

1. Talk about your working relationship with your lead pastor (or other preaching pastors).
2. How does your church’s theology and doctrine impact the service planning process?
3. Are there certain songs you have chosen not to sing because of a theological conviction?

### **Disciple**

1. Jesus’s words in Matthew 28:19 commission us to make disciples. How do you keep a vibrant walk as a disciple of Christ and pass this on to others in your ministry?

### **Artist**

1. How do you view creativity and artistry in the context of your life and ministry?
2. What sorts of artistic programs, events, and experiences have you found benefited the mission of your church?
3. How has God used the arts for his glory in your setting?

## **Leader**

1. How are you engaged as a motivator, as a vision caster before the people you serve with?
2. How do you approach leadership development in your ministry?
3. What are your best practices in identifying, equipping, and launching new leaders?
4. Is there a plan to foster multi-generational and/or multi-ethnic diversity among your worship leadership? If so, how does this work in your church?

## APPENDIX 4

### DATA FROM SURVEY PART 3 (ARTISTRY)

Question: “Describe how you grow in your own skills as a musician/artist?”

The following were answers offered by individuals in the study.

1. Learning and practicing new skills/techniques/instruments (Seasonally, for example: in 2018 I built guitar effects pedals. In 2018–2019 I regularly played in an alternate guitar tuning. In 2021 I started learning the cello.).
2. Listening to a variety of styles and content related to music from experts in their craft (Podcasts, Youtube Channels).
3. Regularly participating in lessons or courses (1 or 2 courses or sets of lessons a year, guitar, vocals or other).
4. Teaching others (on a weekly basis).
5. Semi-regular practice. Proper warm-up exercises. Looking for new ways to grow in creative elements.
6. Ha! I need to practice more...necessity drives me, when required. I have taken lessons in the last year, which was helpful. Ultimately, I see my role shifting from leading to raising up, so I'm less motivated to grow as a musician in this stage of life (unless I'm lacking in a skill that would make me effective as a worship leader).
7. Practice, furthering my learning/education, intentional time away (retreats, conferences).
8. Admittedly, this has taken a significant backseat in my own ministry.
9. Regular check-ups. Working on new songs is a great way that I keep my skills sharp. I've also ensured that when needed, or when I've hit a capacity ceiling, to take private lessons on my own instruments—whether they be my main instrument or not.
10. Practice as much as I can. Resist the urge to default to what I know best. Jam with lots of musicians. Learn to play to a click track.
11. Playing regularly.
12. I do a fair amount of preparation for my own roles in different services and engagements. I don't current spend a great deal of time working on my technique but have been contemplating how I can get back to that—checking in to ensure I'm maintaining and improving where I can. I have been researching different resources

to provide to members of our worship ministry and have benefited from much of what I've read/watched/listened to. I'm currently enjoying learning more complex (jazz/gospel) theory concepts and bringing that knowledge into my chording and tailoring of music to our ministry.

13. Reading, practicing music fundamentals. Watching and listening to podcasts and training sites.
14. Writing and recording are some of the best ways to keep myself sharp musically.
15. Listen to a variety of music and intentional practice, time spent with the Lord writing music.
16. These days it's mostly through song-writing and recording, but I've gone through seasons of learning new instruments and styles and more vigorous musical practice.
17. At this point in my musical life, I am on the decline physically which is impacting my ability to improve. I do still try and go on YouTube to learn little tweaks etc., but in reality I am no longer a professional musician whose main role is to maintain an elite playing level, but rather a Pastor who happens to be able to play and lead.
18. Engage in music outside of the church.
19. I try and be practicing mainly my vocal regime which is what I find myself doing most regularly.
20. We are however always working on developing new songs and producing new music so that keeps me sharp on all my instruments.
21. I just admit that I do not prioritize personal practice enough.
22. Formal music training (private lessons and university), mentoring relationships, listening, and musical experiences that stretch (different, harder, working with those who are better).
23. Listen broadly to other Christian and secular music, read theology and books on ministry, continue to grow as a songwriter and arranger through working on projects for the church and outside the church.
24. I spent years taking lessons and going to school for music. These days however, I do my best to try and follow blogs and social media accounts that stimulate curiosity and interest in the skills I don't have yet.
25. Working on my craft has always been part of my regular weekly routine. Both instrumentally/vocally, as well as stretching myself by watching and learning from other artists. I tend to try to learn from some of the best of the best, both in the Christian family as well as learn some techniques from non-Christian sources as well. I have found this to be a pretty invigorating experience. The other way I grow is by forcing myself to memorize all of our music, of which we introduce a fair amount of new music . . . usually about 20 songs per year.
26. Finding artists who inspire me—Christian or not. And just sitting down and practicing. Whether it's playing through familiar material and letting myself musically wander to new places, or intentionally working on a brand-new piece.

27. I try to practice and learn each song from the perspective of each musician so that I can understand how the band interacts together and how music is changing. I try to watch other services, read, listen to podcasts and go to concerts, art museums, etc. I joined a community choir with a renowned conductor to hone my vocal, auditory and conducting skills, plus it's incredible for my soul to be part of something so intense and musically incredible with nothing to do but my own part. I try to teach or mentor. When I'm actively teaching or mentoring, it's also like pointing a mirror at myself for my growth areas.
28. I feel like because I have stepped back from leading a team regularly and moved into a coaching role. I have had the time and opportunity to learn new skills that I otherwise would not have had the chance to. I have moved away from just singing and playing acoustic guitar to now learning electric, bass, percussion, banjo, and drums. It has been a huge stretch but quite enjoyable.
29. I practice regularly. I watch videos and tutorials. And I surround myself with better leaders, musicians, and vocalists so I can grow in my own skills.
30. I spend time practicing regularly working on the technique I need to lead each song with excellence on my instruments and my vocals. I do not want my lack of personal skill on the instruments I play be a stumbling block for others.
31. The biggest way would be by taking the time to learn or at least have a grasp on every instrumental part for the songs that we lead. I'm not necessarily the most talented musician on the team, but I put in the work to understand what each one does and how to teach or communicate parts to everyone on my team. This helps me grow and become a well-rounded musician. As well, I utilize resources like [worshiponline.com](http://worshiponline.com) and [worshipartistry.com](http://worshipartistry.com) to learn parts and understand how the songs all come together.
32. Lots of practice. Listening to different arrangements/covers of songs. Taking online courses/lessons when needed.
33. I play my instruments (guitar, bass) very frequently, almost every week, and I rehearse at home individually. doing scales, practicing techniques I need to learn. I often play with other musicians, so this also helps me develop my skills of playing with others. Listening to others.
34. I do not foster it very well outside of weekend service prep so I suppose that would be how I push my musicality.
35. I do regular session work, and purchase masterclasses online. Right now, I am busy with the hexatonic scale masterclass.
36. By learning new/more challenging songs (video tutorials help). By learning a new instrument.
37. Personal practice: working on material that stretches my skill level.
38. Like any other discipline, it takes practice to excel. I do my best to surround myself with people who can do things better than I can and learn from them.
39. Practice and learn new songs weekly.

40. (Not necessarily in this order) I grow in my own skills by 1. Surrounding myself with people who are more skilled than I am, 2. Challenge myself to learn specific arrangements of songs, 3. Intentionally deviate from specific arrangements and come up with my own arrangements, 4. Surrounding myself with people who are less skilled than I am (my skills grow when I am trying to elevate someone else's skills).
41. Being formerly a youth pastor that put emphasis on musical worship in the youth worship service, a lot of personal skill growth was through working with youth worship teams, learning through trial and error, identifying areas that needed improvement, and improving together as a team!
42. I love watching people play on YouTube/Instagram and then taking the time to reverse-engineer what they are playing. I have learned so many chord voicings and cadences by hearing something beautiful and then dissecting it! I'm very fortunate to be able to find time almost every day to head into the sanctuary and play the piano.
43. LOL. I don't pay nearly as much attention to this as I would like or think is important, but there's a lot of things I'd like to be better at than I am. Still, I'm trying to learn new things as I go. Learning new chords or arrangements, asking my team for ideas, etc. Plus, we do some song-writing, which is a skill in itself.
44. I try to spend an average of about an hour a day working on my instrument and voice. I engage myself in music and visual arts projects outside the church setting on a regular basis.
45. I currently don't practice apart from playing songs as they are recorded or as close to it as I can. So too does the rest of the band with the Multitrack app for rehearsals.



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## ABSTRACT

### DISCOVERING MINISTRY BEST PRACTICES AMONG WORSHIP PASTORS OF CANADIAN CHURCHES WITH AN ATTENDANCE OF AT LEAST SIX HUNDRED

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The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2023  
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This research project is intended to gather ministry best practice ideas from worship pastors of Canada's larger evangelical churches. Demographic and ministry data is useful for worship pastors seeking wisdom in the areas of theology, discipleship, artistry, and leadership. Chapter 1 introduces the context and rationale of the project, plus goals designed to meet stated challenges. Chapter 2 delves into the Scriptures as the biblical basis for pastoral ministry in worship, focusing primarily on passages from 1 Chronicles, Acts, Colossians, and 2 Timothy. Chapter 3 summarizes the writings of modern authors on the theoretical, practical, and historical issues related to the role of worship pastor. Chapter 4 unveils survey and interview data compiled from forty Canadian worship pastors. Demographic and ministry statistics are summarized in written and chart form. Chapter 5 includes an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the project, including the author's theological and personal reflections. Ultimately, this project seeks to encourage and advance the local church in Canada and around the world by strengthening and resourcing its musical leaders.



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