

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Music Ministry Showcase

Psalter

Psalms 150 (NRSVUE)

- ¹ Praise the LORD!
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty firmament!
- ² Praise him for his mighty deeds;
praise him according to his surpassing greatness!
- ³ Praise him with trumpet sound;
praise him with lute and harp!
- ⁴ Praise him with tambourine and dance;
praise him with strings and pipe!
- ⁵ Praise him with clanging cymbals;
praise him with loud clashing cymbals!
- ⁶ Let everything that breathes praise the LORD!
Praise the LORD!

Bible/Music Focus

One of the first pages in the United Methodist Hymnal contains a page titled, "Directions for Singing," written by none other than John Wesley. It was John's brother who was the poet and hymn writer, but John's words at the very start of our hymnal shows how important music is to our tradition.

The scriptures are filled with instruction to lift our music to God. That if we are to praise we should praise with every creative part of ourselves. To be filled so much with the presence of God that our bodies cannot seem to be still, and that our very flesh wants to express the good deeds of God is part of what it means to be human. Our music, and our praise is as natural as the beating of our hearts.

The first hymn in our hymnal is Charles Wesley's "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing." It's a song of praise and thanksgiving. It's a song of witness to the mighty acts of God. And the response to those acts is singing.

So may we, in the words of John Wesley, "Sing All...Sing lustily and with good courage...sing spiritually."

Just for fun, here are John Wesley's "Directions for Singing"

I. Learn these tunes before you learn any others; afterwards learn as many as you please.

II. Sing them exactly as they are printed here, without altering or mending them at all; and if you have learned to sing them otherwise, unlearn it as soon as you can.

III. Sing all. See that you join with the congregation as frequently as you can. Let not a slight degree of weakness or weariness hinder you. If it is a cross to you, take it up, and you will find it a blessing.

IV. Sing lustily and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead, or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan.

V. Sing modestly. Do not bawl, so as to be heard above or distinct from the rest of the congregation, that you may not destroy the harmony; but strive to unite your voices together, so as to make one clear melodious sound.

VI. Sing in time. Whatever time is sung be sure to keep with it. Do not run before nor stay behind it; but attend close to the leading voices, and move therewith as exactly as you can; and take care not to sing too slow. This drawling way naturally steals on all who are lazy, and it is high time to drive it out from us, and sing all our tunes just as quick as we did at first.

VII. Above all sing spiritually. Have an eye to God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself, or any other creature. In order to do this attend strictly to the sense of what you sing, and see that your heart is not carried away with the sound, but offered to God continually; so shall your singing be such as the Lord will approve here, and reward you when he cometh in the clouds of heaven.

From John Wesley's Select Hymns, 1761

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of your earliest memories of music in church?
2. What is your favorite hymn and why?
3. Spend a few minutes reflecting on John Wesley's "Directions for Singing."
4. When was a time when you were so filled with God's presence that you felt moved to song.

Prayer

Holy God, we praise you with all that we have. Thank you for a worship space where we are filled with your presence and your assurance. Thank you for music and art, the creative nature you have given us. Guide us to use our creativity to honor you. **Amen.**

"Above all sing spiritually." – John Wesley