

Creative, Collaborative Hymn Arranging with Rev. Billy Kluttz

Bi-District Training Day - January 18, 2020

Song: Walk in the Light by George Elderkin

Walk in the light, beautiful light

Walk where the dew drops of mercy shine bright

Shine all around us by day and by night

Jesus the Light of the World

Introduce yourself

-Say that this is a participatory class and that is non-negotiable

-Overview of the course: theology of accompaniment, ideas, and then let you try them out and lead us in worship

This is not a class on hymn playing, it is a workshop on creative ways to get your congregation to join in hymn accompaniment and worship through music, art, silence, dance, etc.

-Have folks sit in groups (have at least one pianist/organist in each group)

-Tell folks you have your lesson plan for them to take at the end

-We don't have a lot of time and we've got a lot to do, so please forgive me if I move us along during the session

Question: If you are leading worship from the piano or organ, how might you vary the accompaniment from verse to verse? And, **why** do we do this?

Discuss the difference between "playing the organ/piano" and leading worship from the piano or organ

Expanding our ideas of "accompaniment"

Just like we vary the dynamics, registration, and tempo when leading traditional western hymns from the piano or organ, we can vary the accompaniment of hymns in other ways by employing other forms of artistic expression and spiritual practice

Creative congregational accompaniment is all about different artistic textures. Skilled organists and pianists already do that. Today, you'll leave with some new ideas for the entire community to join in the variation of textures during hymn singing.

Theologically, this is also a question of who leads worship during a service? And who can/should lead? These methods all assume that everyone is a worship leader and empowers the congregation to see themselves as such.

Ideas for participatory, congregational accompaniment

Add percussion

Add percussion to a verse with piano/organ

Vary the instrumentation over verses

Add percussion to a verse and have the piano/organ drop out

Ideas for implementation:

Try to match pairings of brighter and darker sounding percussion instruments (bells and djembe, guiro and tubano) with hymns

Teach a core group (kids, handbell ensemble, or choir) and have them play

Have a worship leader model the rhythmic pattern(s) during the hymn

Leave percussion instruments in pews before service begins and cue congregation to add instruments in bulletin (or hand them out alongside bulletins)

Allow congregation to improvise their parts at specific times during the hymn

Fun twist: leave small instruments under the pews and whoever finds an instrument under their seat has to play it during the hymn.

Example:

Tubano or djembe and bells on Comfort, Comfort Now My People

Glory to God with drum and tambourine

Christ the Lord is Risen Today - Watch your neighbor (begin to play after the person beside you so that the sound slowly grows)

Fun tip: have one drummer walk in drumming with the first verse and then have them move to a row and start the congregation.

Readings (overtop or interspersed)

Poems

Scripture

Read the text of one of the hymn verses over an instrumental
(without congregation)

Implementation ideas:

Have a small group rewrite a psalm and then pair those readings
with a hymn based on the same psalm

If it is a long hymn with many verses, cut one or two and make them
readings over an instrumental rendition

Examples:

Read Psalm 23 over 2/3rd verse(s) of Great is Thy Faithfulness

Read 5th verse of God of the Sparrow over
accompaniment and then congregation rejoins at verse 6

Decorate the worship space (hanging fabric during particular stanzas)

Example: To God Be the Glory

Silence (between verses of a penitential hymn, strike a singing bowl or
handbell or chime at the end of the verse preceding the silence)

Strike singing bowl three times and observe a moment of silence
after I Danced in the Morning's 4th verse. Skip refrain and
move to 5th verse.

Prayers (overtop or interspersed) - Invite the congregation to say prayer
requests aloud. You can prompt the congregation with different areas of
concern/ joys with corresponding verses or during interludes between
verses.

Example: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

Confession

Invite the congregation to a time of confession either silently or aloud during the hymn. You can prompt the congregation with different concerns and a declaration of pardon to correspond with verses or during interludes between verses.

Example: Bless the Lord My Soul #2013 TFWS

Create a tableau during the hymn

The tableau could tell the Biblical story of the hymn or could tell a related, modern day story

Blest Be The Ties That Bind - starting in verse two, create a tableau with three people. First, one person comes up and bows their head praying and then in each subsequent verse one or two people join in prayer in different positions behind the person

For the Bread Which You Have Broken - have people process the communion elements in and create a tableau with the elements behind the communion table / altar

Skits

The skit could tell the Biblical story of the hymn or could tell a related, modern day story

Movement

Processionals

Have the congregation turn different directions / toward each other

Banners

Dances

Teach a simple dance to accompany a hymn. If the hymn is short you can do movement for the whole song. If the hymn has verses and refrain, try just creating movement for the refrain.

Tip: Teach the kids the hymn / refrain and have them make up movements and then teach / lead the congregation

Make art or display art

Have a art station in your worship space. Invite people to make art before/during a hymn and display it during the final verse.

Bubbles

This works great with Easter or Pentecost hymns. Have your worship team hand out small bottles of bubbles and invite people to blow bubbles (inside or outside) during specific verses.

Let's try it out!

Give each group a hymn and a new accompaniment method and have them lead the hymn in that new way.

Reflection: What did you notice? What did you feel? What did it make you wonder about?

Resources for further leadership, liturgy, and music inspiration:

Calvin Institute for Christian Worship - <https://worship.calvin.edu>

The Work of the People: What We Do in Worship and Why by Marlea Gilbert, Stephanie Perdue, Christopher Grundy, Eric T. Myers

The Worshiping Body: The Art of Leading Worship by Kimberly Bracken Long

God of the Sparrow - <https://www.godofthesparrow.com>

Next Church - www.nextchurch.net

Music that Makes Community - www.musicthatmakescommunity.org

Like Water Music - <http://www.likewatermusic.com>

About Billy -

I work as Associate Pastor for Community Music & Arts at Church of the Covenant (PCUSA) in Arlington, Virginia and lead Immanuel in the Evening (5:30 pm on Sundays) at Immanuel Presbyterian Church (USA).

I love leading workshops, classes, and retreats for churches. I have also worked alongside worship staff and lay leadership one-on-one to equip them for worship leadership and new projects. If you would like me to work with your church please reach out and we can design something together!

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Billy's recent publications -

"Billy Kluttz on Paperless Liturgy and Music." Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. January 9, 2020. Co-authored with Joan Huyser-Honig. <https://bit.ly/2tJU3zE>

Featured: Huyser-Honig, Joan. "Intergenerational Worship Model Based on Scripture and Story." Calvin Institute of Christian Worship. January 6, 2020. <https://worship.calvin.edu/resources/resource-library/intergenerational-worship-model-based-on-scripture-and-story>

"Call to Worship and Paperless Liturgy." *Next Church Blog* (nextchurch.net/blog), January 9, 2019. Co-authored with Elizabeth Pruchnicki.