

Liberty Community Church Music Ministry Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of the music ministry at Liberty Community Church is to selflessly and skillfully play songs of praise to God which, in a repentant believer's heart, will create a response of worship to the Lord.

Goals

The music ministry at Liberty Community Church desires to:

- Set our minds on things above by singing songs of praise to our heavenly Father and Christ who is seated at His right hand.
- Together with one voice, glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ by corporately singing with the congregation.
- Have a music ministry where the vocalists sing the melody in a way that people can follow and not be a distraction by doing "too much" vocally.
- Endeavor to sing songs which accurately contain biblical doctrine or the nature of God and what He has done.
- Promote both the vertical aspect of worship through song, and also a horizontal congregation aspect to our singing. Congregational singing led by the music ministry is both a personal and corporate activity.
- Through the selection of music, encourage congregational signing, thereby teaching and encouraging the gathered church through song.

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
Colossians 3:16 ESV*

Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!

Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!

Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise! Psalm 95:1-2 ESV

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Hebrews 13:15 ESV

One example of these goals in application could be a particularly moving or personally applied sermon paired with the music ministry closing the service with a song that drives home the truth of the message. The church is not just singing words. The church is singing truths. Through congregational signing, the church may also encourage the hurting, together as one. When someone in attendance submits to Christ and you see that person singing 'amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me' --- this is all congregational singing, for the Lord, and also for the teaching, admonishing, encouraging, and comforting of the people.

Style

The music style of the music ministry is contemporary. The music ministry often has a full band. A full band is the general stylistic goal. There are times when the style of music played can range from lots of drums, to stripped down acoustic, to somewhere in the middle. The music ministry plays to tracks (see 'Requirements' section for more info).

Each local church is reflective of its people and has its own distinct style. Liberty Community Church has, since its inception, always had a contemporary band leading its music. This in general application, for example, means no one is going to walk in and think they're in a Baptist church in the "praise chorus" era of Christian music. It also means on the other end of the spectrum, we are not chasing the CCM Top 10 list and are chasing the most "new and freshest" contemporary Christian music (see 'Song selection' section for more info).

Ideal band:

The ideal music team band would include at least 1 guitar player, 1 bass player, 1 acoustic, 1 drummer and a keyboard/piano player. 1 to 2 vocalists (preferably someone who can sing harmonies when not singing lead).

However it should be said that there is no perfect church band. The music team must be reflective of the gift and talents of the members of the congregation. The music team for various weeks can also function at times as a fully stripped down acoustic. The drawback to this is, it has been observed that sometimes the congregation is apprehensive to hear their own voice or other people hearing them singing, which in turn can reduce congregational singing. The music team desires full congregational participation and does not function as a performance to be watched.

Ministry Leader

The ministry leader of the music ministry must be a demonstrate faithfulness, have the desire to serve the church, meet the requirements of I Timothy 3:8-13, have the confidence of the music team, the elders and the congregation.

The music team leader has the following responsibilities:

- Find, develop, and organize musicians and vocalists.
- Pick the music for the Sunday morning service, exercising good judgment and discernment.
- Send out set lists.
- Consider the needs of the congregation, the church, and the music team.

- Audition new music team members and make decisions about additions to team.
- Provide team members with chord charts and resources as needed.
- Communicate with the elders concerning the functioning of the music ministry.
- Serve as point person relating to music for other church meetings such as the communion meeting, ministry events, and other church services.

Music for other church meetings:

The music team leader's responsibility is primarily concerning Sunday morning, however there are other meetings of the church where the music team leader will assist. The music team leader must enjoy music in the church, enjoy suggesting music, and enjoy being tasked with finding songs that fit with the goals and ministry focus of the church.

For men's and women's events that require music, the music team leader may delegate and assist as needed. The same considerations (see below) concerning song selection and suggestions apply to music sung at other events.

For holidays and special services, the music team leader is expected to plan and coordinate with the elders.

For the monthly communion meeting, the music team leader is generally expected to coordinate the opening and closing song for the meeting. The communion meeting is a simple meeting where the leading of the congregation and the Lord's table are central, so the music selection should be simple and Christ focused. Simple hymns are usually most appropriate, so the music chosen often must be able to be sung and played by the team leader, and full band is generally not playing at a communion meeting.

Song selection

Music selection in the context of the church is both a science and an art. There are objective criteria and there are subjective criteria, and the music ministry leader must be free and skilled to navigate both, knowing he must fulfill his ministry for the benefit of the church. It is normal for many members of the congregation to have ideas,

preferences, and opinions (and sometimes criticisms). The music ministry leader may take those into consideration but must not become paralyzed by attempting to please everyone.

Generally, the song section at Liberty considers the following criteria:

Lyrics. Is what we are singing true?

What does the song communicate about God? Some songs communicate deep or more complex truths. Some songs will be simple and very easy to understand. There is the need for both in congregational signing. However, song lyrics must not be vague, where the nature of God is something that is imprecise, confusing or open for interpretation. We must sing the truth. (see 'Goals' section for more info). Songs chosen must be biblically accurate and discernment is required in the selection of music.

The source of the song. Is it trustworthy?

Does Steven Furtick appear in your liner notes? Does the pastor of the church ministry where the song was written cast doubt on the authority of Scripture? Do those connected to a particular song tell you to unhitch from the Old Testament and that Jesus didn't say anything about homosexuality? Are the pastors of the song's authors heretics, in jail, on trial, or kicked out of their church? Because of licensing and royalties, Liberty by playing certain songs, directly contributes financially to the author's of those songs. Those considerations are important.

A further consideration is the open question of whether a song that is otherwise accurate on the 'four corners of the page' but is written by or connected to a ministry that is on questionable ground – if that song being played at our church, could that choice affirm or promote our congregation to seek out other materials or teachings from that errant ministry? The music ministry at Liberty must be wise and discerning, knowing that music is a powerful influence, and the song selection in what we choose and what we do not chose is also an influence on the congregation.

Can the music team sing it?

Not everyone has the same musical ability. Some people who can sing are exceptional talents and can sing literally anything. Most people have more modest talents! It is perfectly acceptable to have a range and preference for certain songs. It is natural and acceptable for music team members to have songs they are more comfortable with. The song selection week to week must reflect the reality of the various skills of the music team.

Can the congregation sing it?

Most songs are learnable. Some songs are easier than others. The music ministry endeavors to sing songs that people can learn, sing, enjoy and result in worship. A catchy melody is usually helpful and a nice plus. Some songs are more difficult. Usually the more "difficult" songs to learn are chosen for an overriding purpose of singing a song with exceptional lyrical content that has rich theological or Biblical truth contained in the songs, and is worth the initial struggle.

Does it fit our style?

This is probably the most subjective criteria, but it is a very important one. The music team has done many songs that have faded away or after some time it could be sensed there was zero connection from the congregation. These observations and history are an important consideration in the song selection.

It could be said at times it is hard to pinpoint what is the exact style of the Liberty music ministry. An example may be helpful when trying to answer such a question: it could be said that if someone brought forward a polka song, and the lyrics were straight from the Bible, with exceptional content, the song was written by Keith Getty, and at the time the Lord gifted us with a horn section-- we still aren't playing a polka song. It just doesn't work here! Not every song that is lyrically excellent can be sung at Liberty. The song must also fit the style, history and context of our church. These song selection decisions can sometimes be viewed as subjective, but the style criteria are an important decision point, knowing that the song must work in the context of our congregation.

Example of music we do most:

- Newer upbeat music (think Cityalight, Citizens, etc.)
- Hymns, often with a modern update (full band or acoustic)
- Newer music that doesn't sound like "CCLI top 100" but is modern (think Matt Boswell, new Sovereign Grace, the Gettys)

Every church has a "sound" and sometimes it is hard to put into words what that always means. If you walked into a traditional Baptist church and they had a full band with the volume cranked to 11, they had a fog machine, and were playing Bethel music, it would probably look out of place and be weird. Conversely, you would not expect a man in a farmer's hat playing the washboard and singing psalms if you went to modern growth driven "mega church". It is not to say that Baptists cannot have a full band and that mega churches cannot have a guy a farmer's hat singing psalms. It is simply reflective of the fact that most churches, if they are well led, have figured out what works in their churches, and they stick with it. That same dynamic exists at Liberty, which has always had a more modern contemporary music style. A more recent development has been balancing this fact with also singing updated hymns and not necessarily every song on the "CCLI top 100".

Ultimately, we try to sing songs that bring glory to God.

Suggestions:

The music team leader should be open to suggestions, within established parameters, both from team members and the congregation, while balancing the fact the team leader is responsible for the decision and execution. The purpose of this document is in part to help explain that there are many considerations that must be weighed when choosing the music for congregational worship. For this reason, the elders are a resource to the music team leader and will assist in suggesting and helping the music team leader as needed, while generally deferring and enabling the team leader to make these decisions.

Song suggestions for music to be used as a service closer is one area where suggestions may be the most helpful. Closing the service with a song that is closely related to the message can be powerful reinforcement of the truth of the message. Preferably the closing song would be a song that is regularly sung. In rare circumstances there could

be a song done where the lyrics, content, and message of the song strongly outweigh the fact that no one knows it. This would be a special situation.

The music team does not generally do “special music” as a standalone performance, except in very special circumstances for a specific purpose.

Ultimately, the authority that the music team leader has to do anything or choose music is given from the elders.

Requirements for serving

The requirements to serve on the music team at Liberty Community Church are those who have completed the Liberty 101 class and are members, actively participating and engaging in the life of the church. Auditions are required (see below) and auditioning does not necessarily mean immediately being added to the team.

Vocalist auditions:

Historically, to sing on the music team you have to be able to sing well. Those who sing on the music team generally try to not stray too far from the melody. The goal is to not be distracting, and to ultimately seamlessly lead the congregation in corporate worship.

There was a time where the music team only accepted people if they could sing harmonies. Currently this is not a requirement, but is a strong preference. Because a limited number of songs are sung on Sundays, some singers will not lead. During auditions, the team leader will have the candidate sing two songs while a current music team member sung the harmony along with candidate. Later, a current music team member would also sing a song while the candidate sung harmonies.

Musician auditions:

Musicians are required to play to a click track (see below). Candidates are required to be talented in their particular instrument. This does not mean perfect, however if the candidate can play to the click track, they generally have the required amount of talent needed to join the music team. During auditions, the music team will have the

candidate play the part as written for a few songs. If the candidate is added to the team, we generally tell team members they have freedom to play the song so long as it fits. It is important that all musicians be willing to learn the music, put in the required practice, and play what they learn.

Purpose of tracks:

The purpose of playing to a track is so the music team will be able to play songs that without the use of a track, the music team would normally not be able to play.

Sometimes the music team will have 7 people playing and singing. Sometimes the music team may have 2. The use of tracks is good for consistency and having a full and better sound. The use of tracks aids in keeping time. It is distracting for the congregation to hear music that isn't on time.

The use of tracks helps team members improve musically. The use of tracks is also helpful because lead lines are hard.

Attitude:

The music ministry wants committed people who are on the team for the right reasons. It is usually very noticeable when someone is on stage singing and they want to put on a show. There's no place for that in the church. The goal is to bring glory to God, not highlight ourselves.

The music team wants people who are humble, and who agree with the approach and leadership of the team. The music team leader should be transparent with all team members about what is done and what is not done, so there should be no surprise about expectations and approach of the music ministry when a new member is added.

The music team wants people who are prepared and on time and who care about the congregation. A motivation for serving on the team should be a love for the church and a desire to serve.

The music team does not hold mid-week practices. We understand that most people have other commitments during the week. We encourage all team members to come prepared for Sunday. The music team has the resources so that team members can access the tracks the way they will be heard on Sunday morning and practice.

Music team members use Planning Center which is a system where one can block out dates where they cannot play. Everyone on the team should respond promptly to emails about scheduling topics.

Conclusion

Music is an essential and important part of the weekly gathering of the church. The music team has a central and highly visible role. The commitment, attitude, talent, and demonstration of musical ability aids the church in the worship of the true and living God. It prepares the hearts of those in attendance for the preaching of the Word. It reinforces and implants the truths of the Scriptures.

Created 6/24/23