

The Church and Music Ministry

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DOI: [10.36348/jaep.2024.v08i07.001](https://doi.org/10.36348/jaep.2024.v08i07.001)

| Received: 25.05.2024 | Accepted: 02.07.2024 | Published: 05.07.2024

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Abstract

The music ministry is an invaluable ministry of the church. A church music ministry exists to develop a comprehensive music programme that ministers to all areas of the church's life. An effective music ministry, therefore, provides the church with good music that members may use for worship, education and evangelism. The study adopts literary and theological approaches and engages pertinent scholarly literature. It discusses the value of music ministry to the congregation, the choir, the instrumentalists who play musical instruments and individuals who lead in the ministry. Furthermore, the study examines the various activities of the music ministry and factors that must be considered when organising a church's music ministry. Finally, the paper discusses the criteria for enlisting leaders and workers for the music ministry. The study concludes that an effective music ministry must be put in place if the church music will be functional within the church.

Keywords: Church Music Ministry, Congregation, Choir, Instrumentalists, Musical Instruments, Leaders, Ministers.

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INTRODUCTION

Whenever one finds dynamic and progressive churches today, if you look critically into what is making the churches progressive, you will find an effective programme of music ministering to and through all the people. Through the music ministry, church members teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness (Col 3:16). The goal of the music ministry is to provide the church with good music that will produce great spiritual results and continuous growth within the church.

A church as a corporate body gathered in congregational services or organisational meetings will benefit from a well-balanced progressive programme of music ministry activities if it recognises music as a medium of worship, education, and evangelism. Church Music Ministry's purpose is derived from the church mission, which aligns with the church's focus and direction. The music ministry is an extensive ministry of the church. It involves all aspects of church programmes.

What is Church Music Ministry?

Whenever people talk of ministry, one should be aware of the reality of the service attached. The word

ministry has a comprehensive meaning. It can be interpreted as an agency, an instrumentality, a departmentalised organisation, or a functioning service group. Therefore, a church's music ministry can be seen as an agency that exists on an organised basis to develop a comprehensive music programme that ministers to all areas of church life. According to Miller, Music ministry is "A comprehensive, church-wide ministry (service) for Christ, for all organisations and services of the church, involving all ages and levels of appreciation and ability, and for all members and participants of the church" [1].

The music ministry of a church exists to serve the church and help it carry out its functions in worship, proclamation, education, and ministry. Therefore, the music ministry does not exist for itself or by itself; it exists because of the church and for the church. The music ministry is designed for all church members and expresses itself in worship, education, evangelism, and ministry. It is utilised in teaching, training, mission, stewardship, and all church activities. It contributes to every department of every agency by providing trained leadership, offering various music services, encouraging continuous music training for each person, and promoting musical and spiritual growth through personal participation and increased appreciation of music. One of the crucial things to note about music for the church is

that it is not for entertainment and is not used for filling up time when nothing is going on in the church services [2].

Value of Music Ministry

The music ministry is valuable to the congregation, the choir, the instrumentalists who play the musical instruments, and the individuals who lead the ministry. The purpose of church music is for Christian maturation; therefore, the music ministry performs the following tasks as it continues to help the church in the performance of its functions:

1. The music ministry provides music and musicians for the congregational services and church organisations.
2. Through the music ministry, people are led to participate in hymn singing.
3. The music ministry teaches music and hymnody to the congregational members.
4. The music ministry helps to train people to lead, sing, and play music.
5. It provides organisation and leadership for special projects of the church.
6. It provides and interprets information regarding the work of the church and the denomination.

While members of the congregation participate in the various music programmes of the church music ministry, experiencing music together by the congregational members strengthens their love bonds. They share common beliefs, doctrinal facts, and fellowship as they sing together. In addition to this, participating in music activities strengthens the relationship between the congregational members and church musicians. As Hustard notes, "Good church music glorifies God and edifies human beings in the context of the church's ministries" [3]. Brewton corroborates this assertion. He says, "A healthy worship ministry is built around these four guiding principles: exalt the Lord, edify the saints, equip people for ministry, and evangelise those outside the church with the gospel" [4]. In other words, to have acceptable, meaningful, and well-performed music, the church must have a well-developed and effective music ministry that will glorify God and benefit the congregation (edify the church).

The Activities of the Music Ministry

The music ministry is one of the specialised ministries of the church. It embraces the following activities within the church programmes.

1. Congregational Activities:

Congregational singing is the heart of the church music ministry programme. It includes the development of congregational singing and good music in all church organisations. The focal point of music activities in worship is the congregation. Every musical activity in worship, whether composed, planned, practised, or performed, is for the benefit and edification of the congregation [5]. Congregational singing should

be the heart of the church music programme and a part of the service where each member can and should participate. It reflects the enthusiasm of the people for their God, their church, and their programme for carrying out the divine commission. The congregational activities of the music ministry are many and varied. These activities, such as congregational hymn singing, regular hymn rehearsals, hymn interpretation, hymn festival, annual carol sings, various music festivals, and the supply of competent musicians and trained leadership for service in the church organisations, affect the church as a whole.

If a church has poor congregational singing, it falls short of having a programme of music that meets the needs of the people. When the congregation sings, they constitute the church's principal choir. Congregational singing must be done by the people and not by the people. When this is done, it will surely encourage participation in worship. Congregational singing will bring a lot of blessings to the church. Instead of becoming spectators in worship, members would be more involved in worship as they participate in it. Congregational singing strengthens fellowship and unity among congregational members. Brian Wren says, "Singing together brings us together, whether we are a choir, a congregation, or a group of friends and relatives around a piano. Musical melodies and rhythms make corporate speech more attractive and decisive" [6]. Thus, music serves as a drawing force that pulls the congregation together in communication with God.

Additionally, congregational singing conveys the great truth of the Word of God. Congregation members declare the Good News of Jesus Christ as they sing, and doctrinal truths are expressed in hymns and songs. It also has a therapeutic value for people. Nathan Corbit says, "Music is a language of prayer in which words are inadequate to express our deepest thoughts. A melodic and harmonic salve, music used in grief alleviates the suffering of the mind, body, and spirit" [7]. Music affects the human body and can bring holistic wellness to an individual's body, mind, and soul. It quiets the minds and hearts of people, brings them into an attitude of worship, and prepares them to receive the truths of God's Word that will be delivered through sermons [8]. According to Miller, "Spirited congregational singing will lift the church members' hearts and voices heaven-ward and help all to experience true worship" [9].

2. Choral Activities:

The choral field is the music ministry's next significant area of activity. The choral activities of the music ministry include all choirs and vocal ensembles ministering in songs. It is the church's responsibility to provide essential resources for its choirs. These include a meeting place, trained leaders, musical instruments, and adequate music materials.

Ministrations through music from choirs and vocal ensembles have blessed church members. This is why the choir's tasks or purposes must be understood by everyone called to be a choir member. These are some of the functions:

- i. To lead the church in worship
- ii. To develop musicianship.
- iii. To witness through music for our Lord Jesus Christ
- iv. To minister through music to the spiritual needs of the congregation
- v. To develop Christian traits of loyalty, service, sacrifice, good work habits, and acceptable social behaviour in members through regular choir involvement.

However, the success of the choral activities will depend considerably upon a carefully planned programme. The interest of the choir members will be maintained throughout the year as the church allows time for good regular rehearsals, which will not conflict with other church activities. The choir is expected to be able to function as a great spiritual and musical agency within the church. The church choir's primary mission is to sing music with a real message for the hearts of all who hear music of praise, adoration, devotion, consecration, and prayer. Therefore, only qualified individuals should be elected as leaders for these groups.

3. Instrumental Activities:

The instrumental activities of the music ministry include developing and using competent instrumentalists. The church's vocal and instrumental activities are significant in worship services. The two are closely related, each depending on the other. Occasionally, each could be used separately. For example, unaccompanied choral and instrumental music could be played independently in worship.

There is a need for the church and the music ministry to get competent hands to handle this vital activity in worship. The sound produced by an instrument would be significantly strengthened and adequately managed when it is made by an instrumentalist who has a deep spiritual conviction and devotion to his task. Any church instrumentalist, including the pianist and the organist, must be Christian. They must possess the highly desirable qualities of cooperation, dependability, punctuality, and interest, which will contribute significantly to effective ministry. It is expected that a church musician should be able to demonstrate high moral standards and desirable personal habits. Anything played in worship from the prelude to the postlude must be done to the glory of God and the edification of the people of God. Instrumental music will be compelling in worship when the music of the instruments brings to mind the text of the song or when it provides a background suitable for Scripture meditation [10]. Every church musician will answer God for whatever role he/she plays in worship.

4. Training Activities:

The growth of the church's music ministry depends upon a thorough training programme. The training activities of the music ministry should include the development of musical abilities, proficiency, and understanding of all church members. Necessary leadership should be trained to develop an understanding and appreciation of the congregation's music. For an effective music ministry, there should be an opportunity for growth and development in musical knowledge by the congregation. This will encourage richer experiences in worship. The church music ministry should design a course of study that would be used to teach and train song leaders, singers, and instrumentalists to fulfil their responsibilities in the music ministry efficiently and effectively. Lee Roberson states, "Every singer should get the best in training. They are learning music. Let the learning process continue throughout life" [11]. Training should be provided in music theory, harmony, instruments, instrumentation, music administration, and music in worship. There will be little future growth without an adequate training programme. The church must allow training programmes, especially for the children, in addition to that of the adults, because a strong church music programme tomorrow requires starting young today. The music ministry is responsible for planning and conducting training programmes for its leaders and workers. The pastor, the music minister, and members of the music council should plan the music training programme on a long-range basis.

5. Promotion Activities:

Musical growth and development that is taking place among the congregation can only be measured by promotion activities. Everything that is done in the music programme is music promotion. There must be an effort to develop those things to build the music ministry's general, choral, instrumental, and training activities.

The church and the music ministry should share the responsibility for promoting the study course for teaching and training. As part of the promotional activities, the church could have a music emphasis where a unique service in which the music organisation plays a prominent part would take place. The church will do well by announcing and advertising such promotional activities within and outside the church using posters, church bulleting, and verbal and visual announcements.

The Church Setting up a Music Ministry

Any group that regularly assembles for a specific purpose will function more smoothly and operate more efficiently if placed on an organised basis. The church music ministry is no exception. The music ministry is one of the most critical organisations in the church, and it should be well organised. Many factors must be considered as a church begins to organise a music ministry. To carry out the objectives and goals of the music ministry successfully, the following needs must be met. These include personnel, time, money,

curriculum, music materials, equipment, facilities, and other things that will provide for the needs in developing a programme such as this to reach its goal. It is evident that organising a church music ministry is no simple task, but it is possible. Let us look at these resources one by one.

1. Music Ministry Personnel

The task of bringing about an effective music ministry involves the working together of the lead pastor, minister of music, church musicians, and congregation members. Calvin Johansson notes, "Music ministry at its best is a corporative venture among congregation, pastor, and musician" [12]. There should be a concerted effort toward achieving a prosperous and healthy music ministry in the church's corporate life as the congregation, the lead pastor and the music minister play their role in the ministry.

There is a need to identify the work to be done and who will be responsible for getting the job done. A successful music ministry requires the concerted efforts of the personnel involved, such as the lead pastor, minister of music, church musicians, and the congregation. Though each has its particular role, a concerted effort will produce an esprit de corps, resulting in a dynamic spirituality [13]. Therefore, persons assigned to lead the music ministry of a church must know that the music ministry is relational and interdependent. It involves a shared ministerial and personal growth.

(a) The Church Pastor:

The church pastor is the CEO of the church [14]. He oversees the music program of his church. A music program will usually progress in proportion to the Pastor's interest and support since music is one of his strongest allies. The pastor should strengthen his understanding of the music ministry's effect on the congregation members' spirituality [15]. The pastor is expected to educate himself about the music ministry. He must also inform the church about the ministry and prepare and plan on calling a music minister. He must prepare himself for shared ministerial growth, personal growth, and public ministration with the music minister. He needs to understand the call and role of the minister of music and the needs of the music ministry. The pastor must be certain that he does not interpose himself in the music ministry programme so that he limits the effectiveness of the minister of music and his associates [16]. Cooperation in planning and sharing spiritual vision will help create an effective music ministry.

(b) The Minister of Music:

Whether he is a full-time or part-time minister, the music ministry should have a person as the administrative head. "The Minister of Music is not a casual song leader who makes a living as a professional musician. He is a church minister who declares the church's message through music" [17]. He is responsible

to the church pastor. In addition to other ministerial roles, he is to lead the church in planning, preparing, implementing, and evaluating the ministry of music in its four main areas: congregational, choral, instrumental, and administrative. The minister of music devotes all his time to developing and promoting a comprehensive music ministry of the church. He is responsible for all the music in all the church services, organisations, agencies, and activities. As Robin Leaver observes, "The minister of music is responsible for drawing together all musical elements of worship to form a harmony of voices, congregational, choral, and instrumental into a theological unison" [18]. The music minister is not just a musician but also a theologian. Robin Leaver further says, "The music minister is not simply a good performer who has studied composition, harmony, and counterpoint, music history, and has a good grasp of choral leadership and knowledge of repertory, he is also a liturgical theologian that is someone aware of the theological functions of music within the worship of the people of God" [19]. The minister of music, however, must possess musical abilities that distinguish him from the other lay musicians with whom he works [20]. The minister of music, therefore, leads the ministry in providing congregational, choral, and instrumental activities to support every church activity for membership growth. He is responsible for planning training opportunities for leaders in the music ministry.

(c) The Music Council:

The Pastor and minister of music should be assisted in planning and directing the work by a music council. The council's membership comprises persons who serve in principal places of music leadership by virtue of their election through the church. Therefore, the membership is made up of music expertise. The music minister is the chairman, while the church pastor is an ex-officio member. The music minister recommends Council members to the nominating committee, which sends their nomination to the church for election.

(d) Choral Leaders: These include song leaders and choir officers.

(e) Accompanist and other Instrumentalists:

These include the Pianist, the Organists, the Guitarists, the Brass instrumentalists, the Woodwind players, the Drummers and others.

2. Time

With the help of the Senior Pastor, the church will do well to allow time for various programmes and activities of the music ministry. Meeting time for weekly meetings and various rehearsals should be carefully scheduled and included in the church calendar.

3. Finance

The church must be ready to finance the music ministry. The ministry should be financed in the same manner as other church agencies. The church budget

must include all expenses for music activities, supplies, and equipment.

4. Music Materials

The church must be prepared to assist the music ministry in purchasing hymnals, songbooks, recordings, and music periodicals, which could be required.

5. Equipment

For successful ministration, the music ministry will need a good sound system, solid musical instruments like piano, organ, electronic keyboard, synthesisers, string instruments, brass instruments, wood instruments, drums and percussive instruments, and CD players.

6. Facilities

Rooms for meetings and rehearsals should be prepared. Places where equipment and supplies of the ministry would be stored should also be provided. In addition, choir space, seats, musical instruments space, and the music minister's office should be prepared.

The Church Enlisting Leaders for the Ministry

If the church music performs the tasks, it should contribute meaningfully to the winning hearts and lives of men, women, boys, and girls, leading them into a close fellowship with God and service for Him. Then, trained leaders are necessary. The church needs a qualified music minister, song leaders, accompanists, instrumentalists, and choir officers. As crucial as promotion, implementation, materials, equipment, and other physical and financial support are to the church music programmes, the quality of the music leadership will primarily determine the success of their contribution to the music ministry. Church music leaders should possess the best training possible to achieve effective and lasting results. Therefore, to have a well-rounded and meaningful ministry, the church must prayerfully and carefully enlist leaders and workers for the music ministry. The music ministry is spiritual, with its primary aim being Christian growth through music. Music Leaders, including instrumentalists, must maintain a deep spiritual life.

Service in the ministry of music, as in every phase of God's work, must originate with a sense of divine leadership. The best results and greatest happiness for the church and the ministry can be attained only when God's direction is felt and followed. Leaders of this ministry must be able to relate well to others with understanding and Christian love.

Each church must set its requirements for leaders. Music leaders should possess certain traits and qualities, and church leaders should elect persons with the following qualifications.

1. A Christian, a child of God. One who has confessed Christ as their Lord and Saviour
2. Music leaders should demonstrate a Christian commitment and concern for the work of Christ.

3. They must be loyal to the church.
4. They must be dependable and punctual.
5. They must show a genuine interest in and love persons of the age level with which they work.
6. They must possess essential talent in and love for music.
7. They must have a pleasing personality.

In addition to the above, the following are general requirements that must be seriously taken into consideration before the church enlists a person as a leader in the music ministry:

1. They must be a member of the church they serve.
2. They must be elected by the church.
3. They must be trained.
4. They must demonstrate specialised skills for their skill duty.
5. They must be experienced in and familiar with their assignment area.

To help these leaders do their work effectively, many of their fears can be removed or put in their proper proportion by a thorough orientation. Knowing what to do and when will build personal confidence, resulting in improved performance.

The orientation programme for an enlisted leader will include teaching the ministry's purposes, aims, and objectives and understanding the responsibilities of choir membership.

CONCLUSION

If church music is going to be functional within the church and if it is going to serve the purpose for which it is played for the children of God, then an effective music ministry must be put in place within the church. Undoubtedly, every church will benefit from a well-organised Music Ministry.

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