

As the Church, we have an enormous and wonderful treasure chest of hymns, songs, chants, psalms, and more. We make these our own by participating and adding our own voices to these songs.

Something happens to us when we sing. We become more aware of how we fit into our assembly, of our individual role in a larger gathering. On a spiritual level, the tune, harmony, text and the sound of our singing can transport us to places we never thought possible. The messages and the images of the text pass through our mouths, and we find ways of internalizing and creating memories through the words, melodies and rhythms. I'm sure all of us have a beloved hymn or two, and are our favourites because these hymns or songs evoke memories of a loved one, an important event in our lives, or were associated with a significant life event. Our faith is nurtured. Quite simply, singing helps shape our faith.

Those who lead our singing-primarily the adult choir-are by nature and conviction servants of God's people. Serving God's people well requires a lot of hard work.

I spend quite a bit of time each week researching what we are singing, and I usually put in a commentary each Sunday to help us understand where the music came from, what the circumstances of its creation were, and how it fits in to our corporate worship. This research is communicated to the choir during Thursday evening rehearsals so we fully understand why we sing what we sing. It affirms the choir's leadership role. It requires us to constantly study and practice to keep our musical skills at sufficiently high levels to communicate meaning to what we sing.

But what this constant preparation and practice allows us to not be afraid to take risks. I believe the only way we can move forward as a congregation is to take risks, whether it involves music which is completely new, music which is in another language, in a non-traditional style, adding instruments or sounds we might think as strange in a worship environment. By taking these chances, all of which are carefully calculated, we move forward and discover ways in which Christians around the world celebrate their faith. Indeed, there are many pop songs which, in their own way, express many faith-based values and would be, in the right context, be very appropriate for Sunday worship. Music can and does create community in ways words by themselves cannot. Music can bind, gather and unite individuals together.

## INTRODUCTION TO GLOBAL MUSIC

Crossing into another culture reminds us that we are all neighbours, and that our church is truly a global church. It is not unusual to find hymns from all over Africa, the southern hemisphere, China, Taiwan or Singapore in Christian worship today.[Our choral blessing for a 4 week period came from Singapore] Almost all North American hymn books have many examples of worship songs and hymns outside of the European tradition which we are so familiar with.

So what does it take to sing another's song? How much do we need to know about their performance practices before we attempt it? If we look carefully in our own supplement *More Voices* and look beyond the words and music at the bottom of the page, you would find example after example of music from international sources. We as a congregation have sung these often. Some examples include *May the Love of the Lord [Singapore]*; *God Bless to us our Bread [Argentina]* *Sent out in Jesus' Name [Cuba]* *Glory to God [Peru]* and many more. *Voices United* is also an excellent source as well. How many times have we sung *Halle Halle Halle?*

It is not necessary, in my view, to try to do an "authentic" performance, if for no other reason it cannot be duplicated. We do not have the cultural predisposition or perspective. We do not have the actual instruments to accompany and enhance the words and music. But we can certainly approximate the style, and as long as we thoughtfully incorporate them into our worship context, it's worthwhile. The important thing is to make a beginning and let it take on its own life... and then we can draw the connection and make it our own.

We share more than the music! It gives us a glimpse of others' experiences with God. It's all part of the vast musical tapestry that can unite us all.