

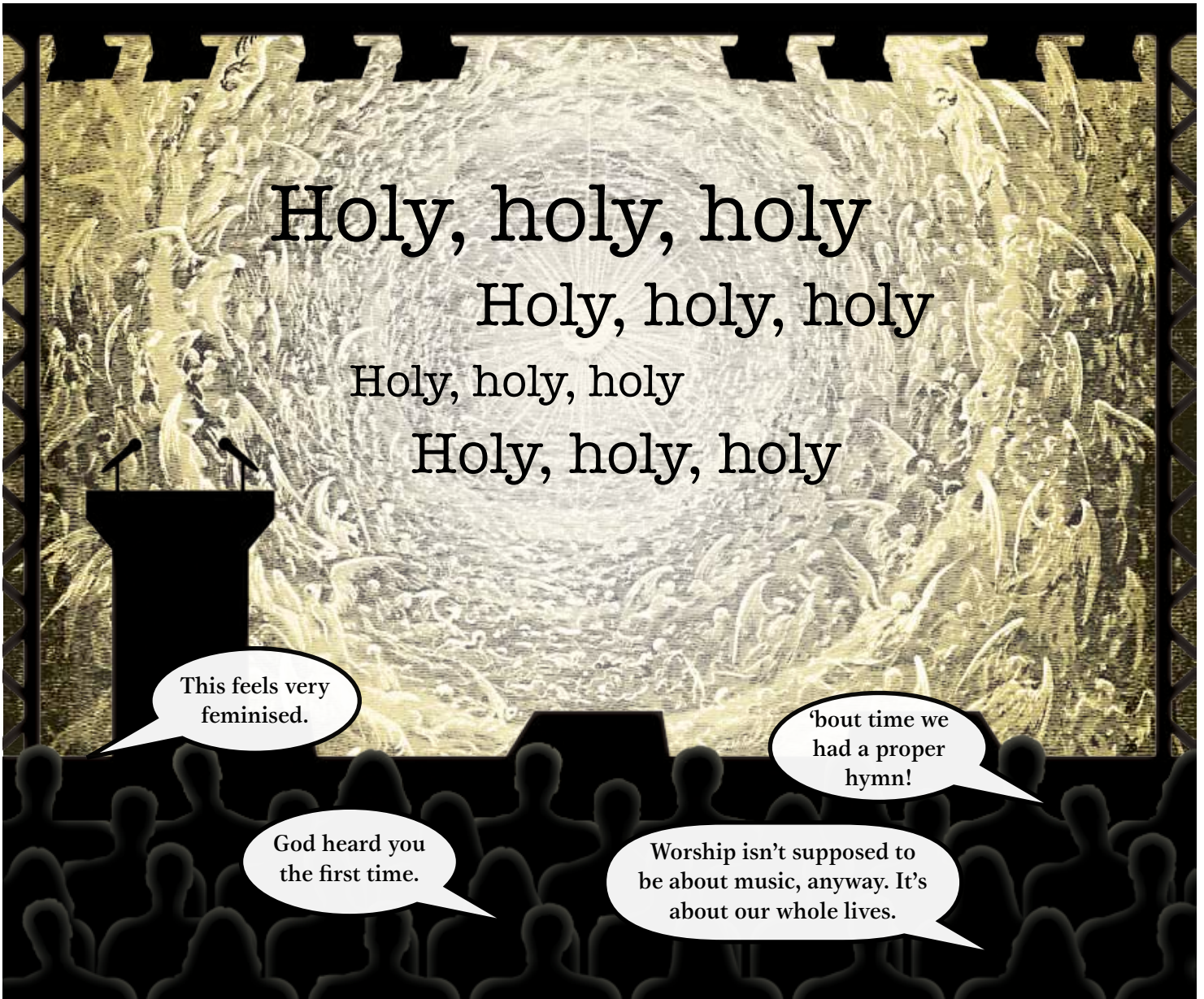


MISSION

ISSUE 1 2017

# CATALYST

Intelligent comment on faith and culture



## THE WORSHIP ISSUE

JAZZ, CLASSICAL  
AND CONTEMPORARY

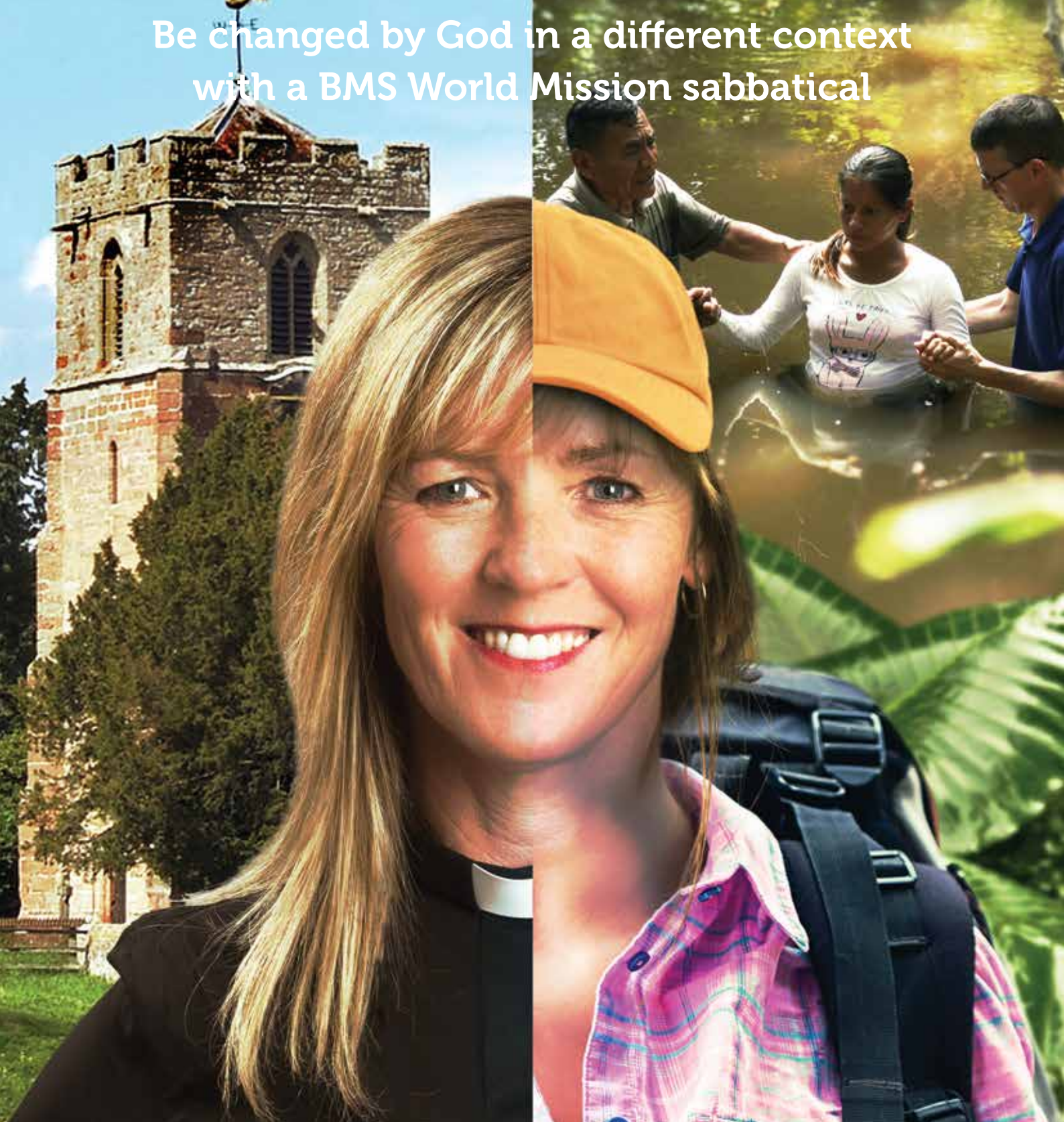
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# UNCOMFORTABLE WORSHIP



## *NOT UNLIKE MARMITE, CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CHURCH WORSHIP DIVIDE OPINION.*

This issue of *Mission Catalyst* is primarily about sung worship, a category wide enough for a library of books, let alone a magazine, but I have a feeling already this will spark some responses!

If there is one assumption lying behind the theme, it's that music and singing have a part to play in the way we approach God. Whilst you'll see references to all kinds of musical styles in the articles that follow, you won't find anyone arguing that music has no part to play in worship. That alone is significant, because if music and singing do have a part to play in shaping our worship, then *different* styles of music and singing might just offer us something *different* in our appreciation of God.

My work with BMS World Mission has given me many experiences of this. I've been deeply moved by a rhythmic black Gospel choir in the US, and blown away by a persistent, tabla-driven, rising intensity to worship in North India. Congolese have a way of taking up the offering that combines music, song and dance that will loosen the tightest wallets, and reggae worship just makes me wish I'd been born in the Caribbean!

But I wasn't. Born in the Caribbean, that is. So, does an appreciation of different genres of worship amount to having something culturally strange imposed upon me? 'Let's all pray aloud simultaneously like they do in Nepal' isn't a blessing to me.

Here, perhaps, we need to see that, just as there are different genres through which we can worship, so too there are different expressions of gathering that offer different possibilities. Sunday worship will reflect those who attend the service, often an eclectic mix of people, ages and tastes. The good news is we have an immense body of work, being renewed all the time, which allows congregations to share together the experience of praising God. The danger of course, and this is often what happens, is that we settle for one genre only, thus missing out on the riches of the World Church.

Away from Sundays, there is something different about large-scale festivals where those present are likely to be more homogeneous, for instance Soul Survivor, or a Pentecostal gathering. Try going – it'll probably be a blessing – or at least check them out on YouTube.

Then there is worship music that we use for personal devotion – listening in the car or as part of a quiet, resting time in God's presence. Here especially is the opportunity to experiment, to dip the toe in the waters of another tradition. Gregorian chant, Reggae, Taizé, Country and Western or classical music. There's so much out there, though even I can't quite bring myself to recommend Christian Heavy Metal! My loss, I know.

But I mentioned a moment ago the riches of the World Church and here we have a challenge. As more of our congregations become multicultural, how do we allow that diversity to find expression in worship? It has been recognised for some years that a church is becoming multicultural not just when people from other cultures attend, but when the leadership represents those cultures too. The same must be said of worship. Surely, when a particular culture reaches a critical mass, which may not be that many, space should be given for them to lead or shape worship.

And if that causes you a degree of discomfort, well, maybe that's exactly where we begin to see what it's like for others who worship with us week by week.

**David Kerrigan**  
General Director



## Mission Catalyst transitions to thrice yearly

**In 2017 a number of changes to BMS World Mission publications will take place.**

Our quarterly *Prayer Guide* will become an annual publication and, along with a refocusing of *Engage* magazine, all of our other key quarterly magazines will become thrice-yearly publications. This means that *Mission Catalyst* will have three issues a year, the first one arriving in June 2017. By making this small change we are freeing up thousands of pounds to support the work of transforming lives through Christ around the world. We hope you will continue to enjoy reading and thinking with us.





*Martin Luther worships with his family*

Q&A

# WORSHIP ACROSS GENRES

*THREE CREATORS OF VERY DIFFERENT STYLES OF WORSHIP  
MUSIC DISCUSS DIVERSITY, FAME AND THE ROLE OF THE  
HOLY SPIRIT IN MUSIC CREATED TO WORSHIP GOD.*

## **MATT REDMAN**

**You're a worship megastar...**

That's kind of a weird term...

**It is, but I think that category has actually become a reality in the modern evangelical world. We have our own worship superstars. How do you feel about that?**

The thing for me is, people really connect to the songs. It's not like "I went to this Matt Redman concert and *man...*" All the response I get is about the songs, and because of that it's a little different, I think.

Most of the reaction I get is quite healthy and mature. I have some friends who've had some strange people responding in quite unhealthy, full-on ways. I haven't really had that. With me it's mostly been people saying, "I really connected with that song because it helped me through this or that," and I'm really glad about that.

We have to be careful. Our tendency sometimes in church environments is to start mimicking what's happening in the world around us. And it's always a lot more subtle than we realise. When it comes to worship music we need to keep

it in check, make sure we don't make too much of people. You can appreciate people for their gifts. I don't even mind people's names being known around the place. That's kind of biblical. God didn't seem to do stuff through a faceless, nameless army of people. The Bible is totally into naming people for what they've been trusted with and what they're running with. But we don't want to get silly with it.

**There's nothing new about songwriters defining the theology of many Christians, but does it stress you out to be in a similar league to a Wesley, defining the**

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### **theology of huge parts of the Church?**

I definitely wouldn't put myself in any kind of same league as a Wesley. I mean that guy's theological breadth was incredible. And [he wrote] for every life event you could imagine. I'm way off that. But I do feel a sense of responsibility. There is something about putting an album out which you can't take lightly. There's a sense that this could affect people's view of God, that if people were to sing these songs repetitively – say a new Christian coming into a worship meeting – then that might help form how they think of God. That's scary. Once you put it out there you can't retract it.

### **Are there any songs you regret putting out there?**

Yeah. The main one would be a song called *Let My Words Be Few*. Because it had a line in there which said "Jesus, I am so in love with you." Now, I knew what I meant by that. I wasn't talking about infatuation or a warm cuddly feeling. I was kind of saying: 'I'm in wonder and my soul is fascinated by you.' But I think I made a mistake. Because that's not really the resonance of that phrase in culture. That was one where I thought: 'that's not cool songwriting,' because I didn't convey what I was trying to convey. And I'm not beating myself up or carrying around regrets, but I do want to learn from that.

## **JAMES MACMILLAN**

### **You once said that listening to serious music is analogous to prayer. Is that because it requires a sacrifice of time and attention?**

Yes, I've said that and I believe that analogy holds good. Especially in our own time when it's much more difficult to put aside the time for prayer or for anything that requires that kind of obedience of listening. Obedience is not a very fashionable concept in our modern time, and to be able to put aside time to be obedient to the mind of God causes tension in a secular culture and it even causes tension in an artistic culture too. Because, in a sense, what's required of us when we go to a concert – and when we put on some music that is not simply background music – [is that] we have to give up something of ourselves in order to contemplate this objective other that is bigger than ourselves.

And that causes tensions within our own culture, that causes tensions for those who want to pray. But it also causes tensions in a culture where sometimes the reflective arts like music are edged



***Matt Redman** is one of the most popular and influential worship leaders and writers in the world.*



***James MacMillan** is one of Britain's foremost composers of contemporary sacred music.*



***Mark Edwards** is a Jazz musician who has been working as a producer in the Christian music industry for decades.*

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further and further towards the periphery of society, because of the overstimulation that exists at the core.

### **Do you see any link or continuity between the long tradition of sacred music and contemporary worship music that has come up through the likes of Wesley to the modern mega worship singers essentially doing pop music with Christian lyrics?**

I probably don't, to be honest. It's not that I don't value those great popular hymns, especially the early ones – the Wesleyan tradition is fabulous.

This touches on my other great love: a commitment to try to keep alive that deep sense of devotion, awe and mystery in Catholic liturgy. The more popular that so-called 'praise' music has become in recent years, the more distant I feel it has become from my concept of what that liturgy is.

Perhaps I'm just old fashioned, but I love the sound of chant. I think it's timeless. I like it in the vernacular and in Latin. I depart from those in the Church who think that the more liturgy is influenced by popular culture, the more meaningful it could be. I think there is evidence of something different, a sense of true transcendent spirit being alive in music that attempts to find that authenticity deep in that Christian tradition.

### **Can accessibility be the enemy of awe?**

Yes. Absolutely.

## **MARK EDWARDS**

### **Given that the spectrum of music is as broad as East is from West, how is it that the Church has ended up with such a narrow band of musical expression?**

I've spent a lot of time working in Christian music over the last twenty years, and this is something that I've pondered a lot. When we say Christian music is limited, what we mean is our charismatic evangelical music. In the classical world we've got Arvo Pärt or John Tavener, people from the Anglican or Greek Orthodox worlds... There is phenomenal Christian music being made out there, but what is very limited is our white evangelical worship music. That is actually quite a small part of music in the UK. A lot of those albums are only selling 20,000 units. It's almost as small as a jazz or folk genre. Evangelical worship doesn't go out and reach hundreds of thousands of people.

I think it's come out of the house church movement, people who weren't that proficient musicians, borne out of that democratic approach to music where anything you write and record must be able to be picked up by somebody who is a beginner and maybe knows three or four chords on the guitar. Those are the criteria for songwriting. It's very much governed by that principle of congregational worship and what we think people can handle.

You see guys growing up in the Church now who are just listening to worship music and that becomes their benchmark. They don't get challenged to take their instrument and their art beyond the horizons of that and they begin to sound like the previous generation of songwriters. [Eventually] you get this very weird phenomenon where a lot of the bands sound exactly the same, and the music is very narrow.

*The answers above are excerpts from interviews with Jonathan Langley and Mark Craig over recent years.*





# Congregational singing: GOING DEEPER TOGETHER

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF SUNG WORSHIP AND ITS VARIED EXPRESSION

**W**e cannot escape culture. There was the English academic at a Canadian university who commented one day, “You know, I’m the only person on this campus without an accent!” Just as we can be deaf to the accents of our own voices, and open to the exotic tones of others, so we can often see clearly the cultural tastes of others while blithely assuming that our own tastes are some kind of neutral normality. In worship and its music, we aim to avoid ‘strangeness’, whether it be ‘old-fashioned’ hymns, ‘trite’ songs or ‘unsingable’ tunes.

Our judgments tend to be partial and full of discrimination – another word loaded with layers of meaning.

We cannot avoid culture: its expression in worship and congregational singing is probably the lightning rod that attracts most attention when tensions over worship occur. There is the inherited culture of a congregation, there are the varied cultures of what may be the generational and other sub groups present, and there is the surrounding culture which some may well wish to address for missional reasons.

There will be those who wish to attempt ‘blended worship’, as Robert Webber famously labelled the attempt to

integrate different cultural expressions in a single, inclusive act of worship, both to embrace contemporary culture and to feed on the riches of past cultural expressions. Alternatively, there will be those who want to opt for monocultural worship in order to deepen the worship experience of a particular group or to make connections with a group which may be alienated by traditional and inherited cultural expressions. And there will be those who just want to have worship with the kind of music they personally like – whether that is very traditional hymn singing or the latest songs from New Wine or the web. I have often been asked for my view



on how to deal with worship wars, those tensions and even splits in congregations supposedly linked to the question, “What kind of music should we sing?” My response is always the same: at root, the problem is not musical but pastoral, not usually theological but spiritual: personal taste coming before what will help my sister and brother.

The worship designer has a number of musical/cultural options when it comes to planning a service. There are different song genres including hymns, song, psalms and chants. There are different musical genres, including metricated hymn tunes, irregular contemporary songs, repeatable songs and very repeatable chants. And there are different cultural genres, from four-part harmony, to folk song, globalised soft rock, heavy rock, Taizé, Iona or music from the World Church with its diversities of music styles. And then, of course, there’s the option of no music or, indeed, the option of silence.

How are we to make decisions when we are so spoilt for choice? How are we to choose between different cultural expressions? Are some cultural genres more (and some less) helpful for Christian worship? Are there values embodied in certain cultural expressions which are inimical to and corrosive of Christian faith? And why sing anyway? And why worship anyway?

Here we are talking about congregational, shared worship, rather than what might happen in personal devotions. I believe that worship is an event in which we make ourselves available before God. It is a repeated and *intentional* activity in which we gather with others in order to encounter God. It is centred on certain core activities – prayer, the reading of Scripture and the



proclamation of gospel, and, on occasion, the sharing of bread and wine. How these core activities are expressed will vary according to the culture and values of those who assemble.

Have you noticed that I haven’t even mentioned music or singing here? Singing



way. When King David brought the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, he “and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.” (2 Samuel 6: 5)

It seems reasonably clear that the worship of the Temple subsequently

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“ *Worship is an event in which we make ourselves available before God* ”

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is a vehicle, culturally conditioned, which we use to a greater or lesser extent, in order to enact those core activities of prayer, reading, proclamation and sacrament. But why sing at all?

In his book, *The Singing Thing: A Case for Congregational Song*, John Bell offers ten reasons why we do sing, or should sing, in worship – from helping us to express or touch our emotions to developing group identity and helping us to work well or express our creativity. The list is long and he suggests that it is, at least potentially, a basic human activity, although where that leaves the tone-deaf I’m not sure.

More modestly, I would suggest two primary reasons for congregational singing: in order to express certain things collectively and in order to go deeper in our engagement with what it is we express. The use of well-crafted words can also achieve some of this but when allied to music, well, say no more, just sing!

Singing in worship goes back a long

involved music and there are plenty of references in the Psalms to singing and various musical instruments. What isn’t clear to us is what that music was like.

Similarly, we know that at least some of the New Testament Church sang “psalms hymns and spiritual songs” (Colossians 3: 16 and Ephesians 5: 19). What we *don’t* know is what those categories included and how they were sung. We can speculate, but that is all. For example, I can refer to ‘hymns’ as linear in structure, taking us from A to B to C (important when planning a service). I can understand ‘songs’ as having a cyclic structure which allows us to repeat them and stay with an idea or an emotion (again, important in worship planning). And I can see a ‘psalm’ as any sung scriptural material – but others will use the words differently, and none of us can claim ultimate scriptural authority.

The book of Psalms has often been likened to a hymnbook and there is truth





in this. But it is a collection of different kinds of poetic material, including material for gathered worship and ceremonial occasions, but also prayers and reflections more suited to individual use.

However, both corporate and personal psalms have found their place in Christian worship. When we worship with others, there is both a need to express that shared faith and a need to articulate our own hearts' longings, a need for praise and lament, for proclamation and devotion. Indeed, other parts of Scripture, as well as the Psalms, have been and continue to be used as song texts for worship. We sing Scripture, not just in proclamation but in prayer, and the word of Christ dwells even more richly in us as we sing (Colossians 3: 16).

So we sing in worship to go deeper and to do it together. It is important to distinguish between that music which happens at the front – in the cathedral choir, or the church anthem, or the new worship song which only the band knows (or likes?), and *congregational* singing. In Church history the congregation was musically silent for centuries. Worship was often a spectator sport in which the congregation witnessed the ritual and 'heard' Mass, as precentors chanted (so that the words could be heard clearly throughout the building) and choirs offered polyphonous and antiphonal renderings of the service.

It seems to have been in the Reformation that the congregation found, or was given back, its voice. Luther wrote hymns and the reformed churches in France, Holland, Switzerland and England metricated (versified) versions of psalms, often set to ballad tunes. In England, this versifying eventually spread to other parts of Scripture and then to hymns



which were not scriptural paraphrases but original compositions.

Benjamin Keach, in the last third of the seventeenth century, seems to be the first pastor to introduce hymn singing as a regular congregational activity. But it was the Independent (Congregationalist) Isaac Watts who, early in the eighteenth century, became the formative influence in dissenting worship. His hymns, with their theological integrity, poetic simplicity and devotional warmth, and later those of Charles Wesley, Philip Doddridge, John Newton and others, gave revival a voice.

These hymns were also important in the evangelical camp meetings of Kentucky and elsewhere, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, gatherings which inspired Charles Finney to develop a framework for evangelistic events which were to influence Moody and Sankey, Billy Graham and much subsequent evangelical mission strategy. The meetings normally had three parts: preliminary worship with singing which encouraged an opening of the heart to God, the preaching which usually ended with an appeal, and a closing section which invited a response on the part of worshippers, including coming forward as a sign of decision and commitment.

This tripartite structure has remained a common feature of large evangelistic meetings and can even be seen in the contemporary charismatic worship of singing, preaching and ministry time.

One of the challenges of music in worship is how to negotiate the local and the global. This formula for evangelistic meetings has been very fruitful down the

years and around the world, but we also know that much mission needs to engage at an intimate, micro level, in which personal relationships, compassion and justice will be key values and concerns. Globalisation not only delivers good ideas (and new songs) around the world, but it can corrode local culture, and innovative mission in one place can become mission clichés in another. Local creativity is vital, and that includes local worship and local music-making.

No gathering for worship is immune from these challenges. Worship leaders will need to make strategic decisions about whether the culture of worship and its songs is single or blended, aiming at a focused group or seeking to be inclusive. Songs join us with others in other places, but we also need to ensure that we sing our own story, or rather our own experience of God's story. We also need to ensure that our songs widen and deepen our vision of God, because what we sing affects what we believe.

John Bell has some truth in his linking singing with our common humanity, but what of those who can't sing, or can't hear or, at least, can't tell one note from another? I have no easy answer to these pastoral questions, but they underline a key worship value: we must not equate singing with worship, but rather see congregational song as a gift of God, alongside other gifts: it can enrich our worship, drawing us closer together and taking us deeper into the riches of the gospel, as we join the heavenly host singing, 'Holy! Holy! Holy Lord!'



# MAN-FRIENDLY WORSHIP

*HERE'S A PIECE ON A CURRENT AND ENDURING HOT POTATO: MEN AND WORSHIP. TIME TO POINT OUT THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM, DITCH THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES AND BUY A KEVLAR VEST.*

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**W**e were made with the capacity for wonder, awe, love, adoration, praise and worship. My German Shepherd dog, Flick, doesn't seem to have that capacity. It doesn't look at the stars and think 'wow, that's awesome'. But we do, and to say that we don't would be to deny that which God has placed in us.

It's a big mistake to make the conversation about emotion or the demonstration of emotion when it comes to worship. People start to talk about men wanting 'songs that don't have emotion in them' – but I believe this is a misinterpretation of the issue at hand and it's not what men are saying.

Who is worship and praise ultimately for? Is it for me, or God? If it's for God, why are so many songs focused on how I feel, how I'm doing, how secure I am? Even in the Psalms where David is incredibly vulnerable, such as in Psalm 42, he ends by saying "put your hope in God, for yet I will praise him my Saviour and my God." This effectively puts the final emphasis on God and not himself. I like that.

Yes, there is a huge spectrum of 'masculinities' out there, and to make a simple pronouncement that 'this song is/isn't man-friendly' misses the mark and is effectively a shallow interpretation of masculinity. However, as an evangelist who has noted that the Church seems to be pretty empty of builders and van drivers, I think we need to do some serious thinking about a culture of worship that

might help these missing millions from the UK Church engage with God.

Some people may say that I have issues because I struggle with calling Jesus "beautiful beyond description" and "my lover". That may well be true. But then

problem somewhere. We can't write it all off to men being out of touch with their emotions. I was in a church once when the worship leader opened proceedings by saying "Jesus wants to romance you this morning." My mates would find that tough.

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**“THE STEEP DECLINE IN MALE CHURCH ATTENDANCE SUGGESTS THERE IS A PROBLEM SOMEWHERE”**

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I kind of like those issues and I think I'll keep them. Karen is my lover and she is the one who is beautiful to me. I love Jesus in a different way and would use different language to articulate that love. For the record, I don't think Karen likes calling Jesus her lover either. Thankfully, she only has eyes for me.

Jesus was fully God, but he was also a man. If God had wanted him to be gender-neutral, he would've ensured that. This leads me to this point – if I stood next to my closest friend and said, "Stu, your name is like honey on my lips..." I think he would 'get out of Dodge'. I find it hard to sing such lines to a man I worship and love in the agape and not eros sense. Agape love requires a different approach. And I think the Church gets confused.

The incredibly steep decline in male church attendance does indicate there is a

And this isn't about feminisation – it's about weak theology and a lack of missional thinking. The fact that we learn so much of our theology from our worship therefore troubles me.

Perhaps this debate and all the angst surrounding it is a symptom of a Church that has lost touch. Perhaps it's navel gazed for so long that its lost sight of reality and the world it was sent to serve. If we were all desperate to see our mates, colleagues and family members meet with Jesus – and were willing to put our churches at risk in order to engage with the world – perhaps our worship would change.

Maybe this isn't about man-friendly worship after all. Perhaps it's about creating a world-loving, God-seeking, hands-dirty Church whose worship reflects its heartbeat. Let's get on with it.

# Is there really A LACK OF DIVERSITY in worship?

THINK CHRISTIAN MUSIC ALL SOUNDS THE SAME? GEORGE LUKE IS HERE TO PROVE YOU WRONG WITH HIS WHISTLE-STOP TOUR OF TOP WORSHIP ARTISTS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE.

At the beginning of the millennium (in what feels now like another lifetime), a friend came to me with an idea. “George,” my old mate said, “what Christian radio needs is an Andy Kershaw-type show, but with Christian music. You’re the man with all the weird Christian music from different countries; you should do it.” At the time, I only had a couple of cassettes from India (yes, it was that long ago), a few salsa CDs and some African albums, and to be honest I’d never thought of them as weird, but I could see Andy’s point. I was also in the final year of a media degree specialising in radio, and so had skills that needed exercising. You could say the timing of the idea was right, if nothing else...

Thus was born United Christian Broadcasters’ World Beat show: an hour-long programme broadcast on Saturday evenings, in which I would introduce listeners to gospel and Christian worship music from parts of the world which were previously never considered. I played bhangra, salsa, merengue, reggae and anything else I could lay my hands on. As word got out about the show, my life really started to get interesting. I celebrated Christmas with an Asian fellowship in Leicester, was invited to speak at a missions conference in Minneapolis, did a bhangra dance on stage in Singapore, and had a Native American singer serenade me in a hotel stairwell in Nashville. And those are just the ones I can remember.

Sadly, UCB ‘rested’ World Beat in 2007. But I kept sharing the great music I’d



*DJ George Luke: using two turntables and a microcosm*

found – mainly through DJing at festivals and writing articles (like this one). Many of the artists I championed are still making amazing, inspiring music. Allow me to introduce you to a few.

## LATIN MUSIC

Think of Latin music, and one’s mind immediately turns to salsa; to the legendary Fania record label that brought salsa to the world in the 1960s and 70s, and the motley crew of musicians known collectively as the Fania All-Stars. Two of the All-Stars, Richie Ray and Bobby Cruz, became Christians at the height of their success and started recording salsa tunes with a Christian message to them. Richie and Bobby are still touring today – as well as pastoring churches.

Puchi Colon has been flying the flag for salsa-flavoured worship music for over two

decades. Known for his cross-cultural style, that includes elements from Latin jazz, tropical, and gospel music, Puchi’s albums have been well received with both English and Spanish speaking audiences.

Over in Brazil, the band No Compasso do Criador is one of a growing number of Brazilian Christian groups and individuals who’ve decided – quite controversially – that it wouldn’t be such a bad idea to combine popular Brazilian sounds such as samba and bossa nova with Christianity. Another gifted Brazilian – the singer, composer, journalist and writer Atilano Muradas – went a step further, launching a samba school which regularly competes in the Carnival (which, for many years, a lot of Brazilian churches had considered a no-go area).

Moving away from the tropical Latin sounds, there’s the Argentinean band Rescate, who play energetic rock with the occasional dip into ska, reggae and even disco.

## ASIAN MUSIC

Growing up in Sierra Leone, Bollywood movies have always been part of my life. So it brought back loads of memories when I attended an Asian church conference in the late 1990s, and discovered that the guest ‘music minister’ had sung on some of the most popular Bollywood films from my childhood.

Now one of India’s most noted gospel singers, Vijay Benedict made his name as a ‘playback singer’: one of the vocalists who do the actual singing on Indian film





*Puchi Colón*

soundtracks, to which the actors mime. Bollywood's playback singers aren't anonymous and hidden like Hollywood's used to be; they are stars in their own right. And prior to becoming a Christian, Vijay was one of the biggest.

Another pair of Christian singers who came up via Bollywood are husband and wife Anil and Reena Kant. All the joy and colour of Bollywood can be seen in Anil's and Reena's videos – especially the one for their song Pray for India.

I can't write about Asian music without mentioning two guys who aren't just one of my favourite Asian music acts but have also become friends: Christopher Hale and Peter Hicks, better known as Aradhna. Yes, my favourite Indian band is formed of two white men from North America. But as they said when I interviewed them, "We're only white on the outside."

### AFRICAN MUSIC

Nothing I write here could begin to cover the whole range of African gospel music. So I'll just throw out some names: Beatrice Muniu, Omega Bugembe Okello, Dayo Bello, Mbuvi, Sonnie Badu and Helen Berhane. And I can't do this and not mention Muyiwa Olowu – radio broadcaster, worship leader and all-round ambassador for Africa. His latest album, *Eko Ilé*, is a love letter to Lagos, his home town.

### CARIBBEAN MUSIC

All the island sounds – especially reggae, ska and soca – are well represented in the gospel arena. The American band Christafari do a sterling job promoting Caribbean artists via [gospelreggae.com](http://gospelreggae.com) and their Lion of Zion record label. Avion Blackman, Christafari's bassist, is the daughter of the legendary Trinidadian musician Garfield Blackman (aka Ras Shorty I) – a pioneer of Soca music and

Philadelphia-based singer and composer has sung alongside some of the leading names in jazz today.

### FUSION

There's an ongoing discussion in the music biz that the genre name 'world music' has passed its sell-by date. The proponents of this theory may well have a point, but I think that rather than scrap the name altogether, it could be re-deployed. A lot of mixing of cultures happens in music these days; maybe 'world music' could be the name for the hybrid sounds that are created when cultures mix. The sort of mingling that produces bands like Salsa

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*“ My favourite Indian band is formed of two white men from North America ”*

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leader of the band the Love Circle.

### JAZZ

Christian music is littered with 'smooth jazz' artists – but sadly, the vast majority don't venture much further than playing bland Hillsong covers on the saxophone.

There are a few who stand out, though; people such as LA-based London boy Mike Parlett. Mike not only does the smooth gospel covers really well, but also adds an Asian touch from time to time, collaborating with tabla and sitar players to produce something quite unique. The Nigerian saxophonist Mike Aremu brings his jazz workouts and worship medleys up a notch by throwing in liberal doses of highlife and Afro-beat.

If your tastes are for the more traditional form of jazz, then check out Ruth Naomi Floyd as soon as you can. This

Celtica or the Afro-Celt Sound System.

The best example of this sort of mixing of cultures in Christian music is the Australian band Rivertribe, who play pulsating house music infused with didgeridoos and percussion instruments from Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

More percussion-heavy culture mixing comes from Psalters – another act that's unashamedly Christian but definitely not safe 'contemporary Christian music'. Any band who updates the old Negro Spiritual Turn me round with the line "Ain't gonna let Donald Rumsfeld turn me round" deserves respect.

I could have placed Benny Prasad in the section on Asian music, but he incorporates so many cultures into what he does, he fits this section better. Benny is a phenomenal guitarist from India; a very humble guy with an amazing sound.



*Muyiwa Olowu*

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Margaret Gibbs

Ethnomusicologist, Baptist minister and former BMS Regional Team Leader for Asia



P E N T E C O S T

P E O P L E :

W O R S H I P P I N G

A S W O R L D

C H R I S T I A N S

WHAT ROLE DOES MUSIC HAVE TO PLAY IN CULTURE, CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

**M**usic is a mysterious phenomenon unique to humanity within creation. (Other parts of creation may appear ‘musical’ but only to human observers.) Music exists in all cultures. It works deeply within the human spirit. Most people find it precious and essential, although they don’t think about it much.

Others think it to be an optional extra. A very few aren’t able to connect with music at all.

Ethnomusicology, the study of the meaning and function of music in culture, developed formally as a discipline in the 20th century. It arose partly through Christian mission work, where outsiders

were investing long years and great efforts into learning other languages and cultures in order to communicate the gospel more contextually. It developed into an academic discipline through fieldwork and analysis, theorising and testing. It records the diversity and development of music in culture and in some cases within cultures which are ‘dying out’ or changing radically. Ethnomusicology has been able to show that music plays a fundamental role in reinforcing social stability and coherence by expressing and cementing human



beliefs, social values and relationships through its structures.

Musical analysis can show that relationship patterns and power structures appear within the actual notes and rhythms of the music of particular groups and cultures. For insiders these don't generally need to be spelt out, but they can be identified and analysed by those with the tools to do so. At first sight, music may seem to be at the vanguard of social change but, in fact, musical structures generally operate to reinforce cultural norms and work to keep them static. It is more likely to be associated aspects of music such as voice tone, song words, new instruments and playing styles – even clothing and movements – which challenge social boundaries. For example, rock and roll first appeared requiring barely more than three basic chords to play, yet everything else about it screamed that significant social change was in the air. Music has to be changed intentionally and rather quickly for it to be able to promote social or political change in itself. Music then can function either to obscure or reveal, to allow or to bar, to bring freedom and release or to manipulate, depending on social context and influence.

Music inhabits our feelings and has intrinsic power to create, change, heighten or develop emotional moods. It can therefore be used intentionally to manipulate or work up individual or even communal responses. Consider how music affects the emotions when a national anthem is played at a sports event, or in a political meeting, or in religious worship. It can work through association. We've all experienced how suddenly hearing a piece of music can transport us intensely to a former time, place or situation in the instant.

Music is however, despite the Romantic poets' views, emphatically not a 'language'. There is no guarantee that what a composer intends to communicate through music will reach another, even from the same culture, in any specific way. It is not always possible to predict the outcome of music's power. Far from being a language, music is a non-specific and crucially a non-verbal form of communication. It works deeply in a manner beyond words.

God is portrayed in Scripture not only as receiving musical worship gladly when it is heartfelt and hating it when it expresses hypocritical praise, but as singing himself with joy and delight over his beloved people. God has intentionally placed the capacity to make and experience music uniquely within

humanity to help us flourish as individuals and in groups. Words can do many things, but God knows that at times only something beyond words will do.

Music, therefore, forms an important part of Christian expression around the world. Fortunately, Christianity has retained enough cultural diversity so far for Christian music to be very diverse too, in some cases reflecting the cultures where it has taken root, in others the cultures of the gospel bearers. Singing together rather than speaking is especially appropriate for corporate worship. It allows even a large crowd to express themselves all at once as loudly as they like producing, ideally, something greater than the sum of its parts rather than the cacophony and chaos caused by everyone speaking at once. Through song, music can combine unity of meaning with a huge diversity of range, pitch, harmony and tones of voice. It can include all and any kind of musical instrument, just as in Psalm 150 where the three technical categories of musical instrument to be found in any

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*“ Music is, emphatically, not a language ”*

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culture – strings, wind and percussion – are all validated for worshipping God. However, in worship, music and musical instruments should serve the words rather than the other way round.

The Pentecost communication miracle, which began the restoration of cultural divisions echoing down history since Babel, required those declaring the gospel to speak new languages. The insider must change for the benefit of the outsider. Christianity owns one Lord, faith, baptism and so on, but is not a cultural movement based on one language or way of doing things. At its best, it foreshadows the worship in heaven where, as John's vision in Revelation 7 reveals, distinction of language and therefore culture are apparently preserved.

What might this mean for musical worship here and now? What approach would be most welcoming and inclusive in an increasingly multicultural Britain? What best reflects and draws on the



PENTECOST PEOPLE is a new online resource that Margaret Gibbs helped bring into being. It is available on the Baptists Together website from May 2017, comprising theological foundations, case studies and practical help to promote multi-cultural worship in local churches.

gifts of everyone who is already part of the congregation? What would express a longing for those not yet part of it to feel at home? What demonstrates that we are part of a community spanning all cultures and histories? What prefigures the multicultural worship of heaven most authentically, and even suggests we are looking forward to getting there?

Some UK churches now have very diverse congregations, although rarely as diverse as their local communities. Despite this, experience shows that diversity in congregational makeup doesn't automatically result in diversity of practice. Frequently, groups are multi-ethnic without necessarily being multicultural at all. The latter refers more to how things are done than who is in the room. Choices of music won't come to reflect the variety of people within a congregation automatically. There has to be intention. More importantly, our assumptions about how things should be done won't change without a lot of listening, learning, purposeful encouragement, giving permission, and trying out new ways. This is especially true when it comes to the dynamics of leadership. Who decides about and leads what is done? Who has permission to be involved? What breadth of material is accepted and allowed? These are key areas to work on in bringing about more diverse and inclusive worship.

Whether we are aware of it or not, the music we use in church operates like glue, week in week out, reinforcing our beliefs, values and relationship dynamics. It can be reactionary or prophetic, prolonging a limiting set of cultural parameters or embodying the inclusion, mutuality and diversity of fellowship with God and each other initiated at Pentecost and finally to be realised in the worship of heaven.

# IS THERE MORE TO WORSHIP THAN MUSIC?

WORSHIP CAN TEACH US THEOLOGY AND DRAW US INTO THE  
PRESENCE OF GOD, BUT SOMETIMES IT FALLS FLAT. WHAT IS IT  
THAT MAKES THE BEST SUNG WORSHIP?

**T**here is no walk of life, other than in a religious setting, where the term worship is properly used. We use it as a metaphor to try and express profound respect or love for another person – ‘he worships the very ground she walks on’ – but true worship is solely a religious activity, an activity expressed towards God. Worship is one-way traffic, from us to God.

When my faith burst into life in the late 70s, it began as an almost instant reaction to two activities encountered on my first visit to my local Baptist church. The first was hymn-singing and the second was the preaching of God’s word. I won’t claim to remember the hymns we sung, but I remember the church and its people well, and I remember the green hymnbook so I can guarantee that we were singing what we would call the great hymns of the Church. *Amazing Grace*, *Be Thou My Vision*, *Rock of Ages*, *Great is Thy faithfulness* and perhaps the hymn that moved me most deeply, George Matheson’s *O Love that wilt not let me go*.

These hymns were my first theology tutors. Week after week, we were brought into God’s presence through singing (*Come let us join our cheerful songs*), and

nurtured there (*Lord speak to me that I may speak / in loving echoes of thy tone*). We were challenged to be his disciples (*The Lord is King, I own his power / his right to rule each day and hour*) and sent out to proclaim the gospel (*Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim / till all the world, adores his sacred name*). Hymns and songs, then and today, express the great themes of forgiveness, love, sacrifice, atonement, guidance, faithfulness, grace, mercy and assurance.

In the 70s and 80s we experienced the charismatic renewal movement, which in turn sparked a new positivity as the ‘March for Jesus’ took to the streets with confident expectations that we could win this land for Christ. New songs expressed an intimacy that was missing (*As the deer pants for the water / so my soul longs after you*). Spring Harvest changed the landscape with large-scale anthemic gatherings, to which New Wine, Soul Survivor and Hillsong have given continuing expression.

Along the way we’ve sung the best and groaned at the rest; thus it was in the beginning, is now and forever more shall be!

But let me suggest some hallmarks of the best of sung worship.



## 1. GOD-CENTRED

Flick through a decent hymnbook (remember those?) and the opening lines of so many hymns and songs that address God will strike you. ‘Dear Lord and Father of mankind...’ ‘O Jesus I have promised...’ ‘Holy Spirit, come confirm us, in the truth that Christ makes known’.

Not all material is as explicitly directed at God. Many are declaratory, but what they declare is unswervingly focused on the nature of God and his saving works. ‘I know that my Redeemer lives...’ ‘The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord’.

And so many of today’s songs tick this box so well. Phil Wickham’s *This is Amazing Grace* is but one example.





## 2. STORYTELLING

Perhaps evoking a more distant age when stories were passed on orally, many hymns are great storytelling moments. Christmas carols are the best examples, but others are those that relate the narratives of crucifixion and resurrection. ‘O Sacred head sore wounded...’ through to ‘Jesus Christ is risen today...’

Visitors to our churches, and dare I say some of our church members, are not familiar with the biblical stories. There is a lack of confidence in picking up a Bible for fear of embarrassment. That needs to be addressed separately, but singing can be a wonderful storytelling tool.



## 3. WITH ONE VOICE

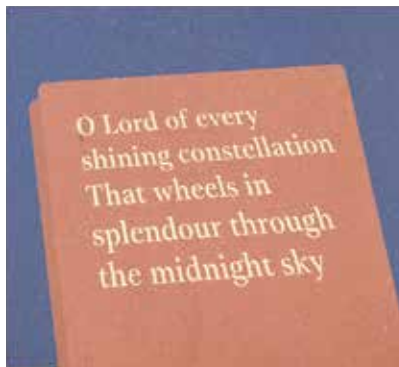
Worship singing is a congregational enterprise. There is something deeply mysterious and strangely life-enhancing in the act of singing with others. It is a different language of sorts, and it ties people together and magnifies, both acoustically and conceptually, the deepest beliefs we hold together. Some old hymns failed at this point for their words became meaningless over time, and some new songs fail too. But congregations know that complex words with unpredictable structures or terrible lyrics are not conducive to congregational participation. ‘Oh I feel like dancing. It’s foolishness, I know.’ Good grief!

“ We should see sung worship as part of the evangelistic ministry of the church ”



## 4. SINGING AS MINISTRY

Sung worship is powerfully evangelistic when undertaken as a united act. In today’s atomised world, people rarely experience community. In many parts of the country you won’t be chatting much to your neighbours, assuming you even know their names. Relationships are often more superficial (especially for men) and people easily experience a longing for something deeper. To find yourself in a crowd of people in harmony (literally, we hope) and focused on God can have a powerful impact. Pastors and worship leaders should see sung worship as part of the evangelistic ministry of the church, and when they do, they will understand that ‘getting it right’ is less to do with musical competence and more about effective ministry.



## 5. POETIC

My early worship experience was shaped by language that was poetic. I have no problem with singing ‘Great is your...’ rather than ‘Great is thy faithfulness’, though I am not

persuaded of the merits of contemporising language for the sake of it. But this isn’t about Thee and Thou, it’s about allowing words to help us soar to places of wonder:

‘O Lord of every shining constellation  
That wheels in splendour through the  
midnight sky

Grant us your Spirit’s true illumination  
To read the secrets of your work on  
high.’

Chris Tomlin’s *Indescribable* captures this brilliantly: ‘Who has told every lightning bolt where it should go, or seen heavenly storehouses laden with snow.’

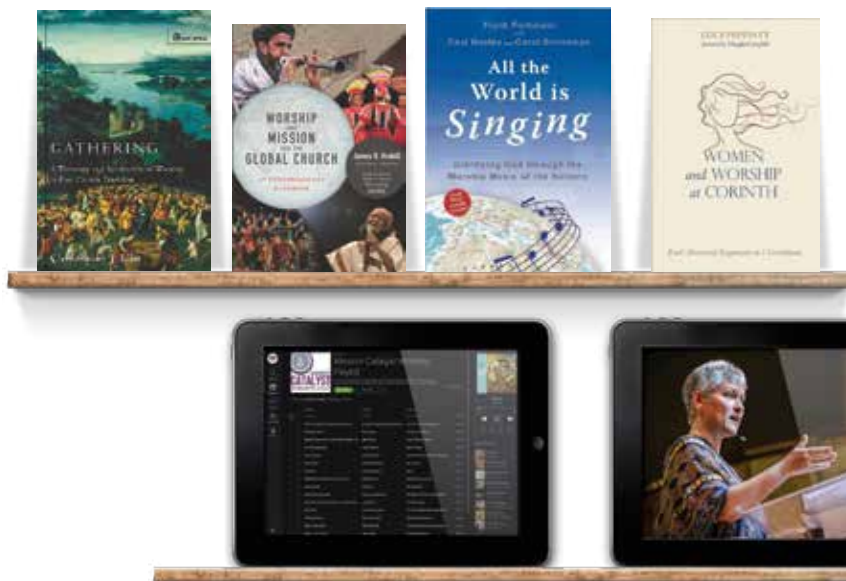
The best songs, whether spiritual, rock or soul will utilise poetry. Not for nothing was Bob Dylan given the Nobel Prize for literature. Worship writers with the word ‘yeah’ in the lyrics haven’t tried hard enough.



## 6. MISSIONAL

Lastly, worship should be deeply missional. Singer-songwriter Keith Getty recently lamented the absence of mission-themed hymns. How many could we easily name beyond *Facing a Task Unfinished* and *Go forth and tell*? As fewer people come forward for long-term mission service, I wonder if we’re still preaching the Great Commission but wonder too whether we’re stirring the heart as well as the mind.

One thing is sure. The Church is indebted to generations of great writers, from Isaac Watts, Frances Ridley Havergal and Fanny Crosby to Stuart Townend, Keith and Kristen Getty and Darlene Zschech. No generation has a monopoly of great worship material.



## READING

### PENTECOST PEOPLE

*The Baptist Union of Great Britain*

A new online resource, coming in early 2017, which will be available on the BUGB website. Theological foundations, case studies and practical help to promote multicultural worship in local churches.

### GATHERING

**A Theology and Spirituality of Worship in Free Church Tradition**

*Chris Ellis*

Spirituality and theology in Free Church worship, addressed by *Mission Catalyst* contributor, theologian and former President of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

**WORSHIP AND MISSION FOR THE GLOBAL CHURCH**  
**An Ethnodoxology Handbook**

*James R. Krabill (Ed)*

An exhaustive compendium of current thought and practice in studying and promoting world worship. Comes with a CD.

### ALL THE WORLD IS SINGING

**Glorifying God through the Worship Music of the Nations**

*Frank Fortunato (Ed)*

Also accompanied by a CD, these 41 short chapters each introduce worship music from different cultures.

### CANTATE

**A book of short chants, hymns, responses and litanies**

*Decani Music*

A book of easy to teach and learn congregational songs and responses from many countries, with helpful advice and information included.

**21 MINUTES OF ALTERNATIVE WORSHIP MUSIC**

**From bands that might surprise you**

*Jonathan Langley*

Devotional music from alternative artists outside the traditional worship stable.  
[bit.ly/altworship21](http://bit.ly/altworship21)

### WOMEN AND WORSHIP AT CORINTH

**Paul's Rhetorical Arguments in 1 Corinthians**

*Lucy Peppiatt*

The Principal of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Centre examines a controversial text.

### THE SERIOUS BUSINESS OF WORSHIP

**Essays in Honour of Bryan D. Spinks**

*Melanie Ross and Simon Jones (Eds)*

Biblical, theological and historical scholars talk worship, liturgy and church.

## LISTENING/ VEIWING

### THE MISSION CATALYST WORSHIP PLAYLIST

*Mission Catalyst*

An eclectic playlist for Spotify users, that will hopefully introduce you to some worship music you've never heard before. [bit.ly/catalystworship](http://bit.ly/catalystworship)

### IS COPYRIGHTING WORSHIP THEFT?

*Margaret Gibbs*

Ethnomusicologist and *Mission Catalyst* contributor who challenges our assumptions about authorship and ownership.  
[bit.ly/gibbsworship](http://bit.ly/gibbsworship)

### GEORGE LUKE'S WORLD WORSHIP PICKS

Bands recommended by this issue's in-house DJ, with links to their websites:

Aradhna [aradhnmusic.com](http://aradhnmusic.com)  
Benny Prasad [bennyprasad.com](http://bennyprasad.com)  
Sheldon Bangerla [sheldonbangerla.com](http://sheldonbangerla.com)  
Vijay Benedict [uecf.net/songs/benedict.htm](http://uecf.net/songs/benedict.htm)  
Anil Kant [anilkant.org](http://anilkant.org)  
Funky [funkypr.com/live](http://funkypr.com/live)  
Salvador [salvadorlive.com](http://salvadorlive.com)  
Jaci Velasquez [jacivelasquez.com](http://jacivelasquez.com)  
Rivertribe [rivertribe.bandcamp.com/music](http://rivertribe.bandcamp.com/music)  
Psalterns [psalters.com](http://psalters.com)  
Mike Aremu [mikearemuvision.co.uk](http://mikearemuvision.co.uk)  
Ruth Naomi Floyd [contourrecords.com](http://contourrecords.com)  
Mike Parlett [parlett.net](http://parlett.net)  
Atilano Muradas [atilanomuradas.com/wordpress](http://atilanomuradas.com/wordpress)  
Christafari and all their peeps [gospelreggae.com](http://gospelreggae.com)  
Muyiwa [riversongz.com](http://riversongz.com)  
Beatrice Muniu [soundcloud.com/beatrice-muniu](http://soundcloud.com/beatrice-muniu)

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Managing Editor: David Kerrigan Editor: Jonathan Langley Design: Malky Currie

BMS World Mission, PO Box 49, 129 Broadway, Didcot, Oxfordshire, OX11 8XA. Website: [bmsworldmission.org](http://bmsworldmission.org)

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