

A GUIDE TO MUSIC OPPORTUNITIES AND RESOURCES FOR MINISTERIAL INTERNS

Prepared by a task force of the Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network
Written by Lynn Beasley and Lee S. Ridgway

One of the most significant responsibilities of a parish-based minister is developing worship experiences in which music is a key element. Among the skills needed for planning such services is knowledge about the role of music in worship and about music resources available, plus the ability to work with the music staff, paid and volunteer, who are responsible for presenting the music.

New ministers recognize the need to gain a background in worship and music before they arrive at their first settlement and this is seldom part of their theological education. The Ministerial Fellowship Committee recognizes that ministerial students can gain practical experience for this background during their parish internships, and suggests that each intern incorporate music opportunities into his or her learning/serving agreement with the intern committee.

The music-related activities described below are suggestions from which you may select in developing the agreement with your intern site. None of these require, nor presume, any training in music. Or, in consultation with your supervising minister or the music director, you may develop other music-related activities. (Note: Not all intern sites may have a “Music Director” as such; this term is used here for the person who assumes the role of music leader, coordinator, or provider. Also, some intern sites may not have formal music programs; if this is your situation, you may arrange to work with the music director at a nearby UU parish.)

These activities are designed to help you gain skills that will make it easier to approach those areas of your ministry in which music will play a part. Among those skills are the following, which you may adopt as goals to accomplish by the time you are ready for settlement:

- Understand the philosophy and role of music in worship, the use of service music, and the importance of congregational singing.
- Be familiar with our primary UU hymnbook, *Singing the Living Tradition*, and be able to select hymns knowledgeably.
- Be able to plan for the use of music in services and other settings in your congregation, in collaboration with the music leaders. Be familiar with the resources for and the variety of music that can be used in worship and church activities.
- Develop the ability to work with music leaders and other musicians, paid and volunteer, for the success of the overall music program. Have knowledge of how the music program is administered and operates.

Role of Music in Worship and the Life of the Church

As a minister, you need to appreciate the power of music to set a mood conducive to worship, provide beauty and inspiration, further the theme of the service, and unite and inspire the congregation through singing together. You also need to understand music in its many contexts associated with church: services, religious education activities, choirs, youth groups, camps and conferences (seldom do we forget those Sunday school and camp songs of our youth!) The following activities can help broaden your perspective on music's role in the church, and help you develop a philosophy that can guide your incorporation of music into services.

- Interview two or three members of the congregation about what music means for their worship experience. What similarities and differences do you find?
- Interview two or three choir members about why they participate in the choir and what it means to them and their spiritual experiences. What similarities and differences do you find?
- Reflect on the meaning that music has or has not had in your spiritual development.
- Discuss with your Supervising Minister and/or Music Director the elements that go into a worship service in your intern parish, the role of music in its worship, and what the Minister(s) and Music Director feel makes a worship service work.
- Discuss with the Music Director the musical "culture" of your intern congregation: style of music generally used in services, favorite hymns, instruments generally used with congregational singing, receptiveness of the congregation to new hymns and songs, and ways that new hymns are introduced.
- Observe the congregation during the musical portions of a service: their participation in singing the hymns, attentiveness to special vocal or instrumental music, what they are doing during the prelude, offertory and postlude. Reflect on your observations and discuss them with the Minister and Music Director.
- Discuss with the Minister, Religious Education Director, and Music Director other areas of the church's life where music plays a part, if any: in the R.E. program, concerts, sing-alongs, theatricals, community outreach, etc.

Music in the Worship Service

In addition to hymns, most UU services include other music, vocal or instrumental. Depending on a congregation's traditions, the music can cover a wide range of possibilities and be presented by musicians that range from paid professionals to volunteer amateurs. To help develop your understanding of how music's integration into the worship service can add meaning to the message of the service, the following experiences are suggested:

- Discuss with the Minister and Music Director where music can be used to augment worship: choral or instrumental responses, solos, music as prayer, to introduce readings or sermon, etc.
- Collect service leaflets from different UU churches (or attend, if possible) to see how they use music in their worship. What similarities and differences do you find?
- Plan, with the Music Director, all the music components for all of the regular Sunday services and other services for which you are responsible.
- Discuss with the Music Director how music fits into, and what music is appropriate for services such as weddings, memorials, and child dedications. Discuss what policies are in place with regard to the church's music personnel and outside musicians for weddings and funerals.
- Discuss with the Music Director the considerations of music for special services such as Thanksgiving, Christmas (family service, candlelight service), Easter, R.E. Sunday, Flower Communion. If possible, help plan the music for some of those services.

Working with the Music Director and Understanding How the Music Program Operates

Like the Minister's preparation of sermons and services, most of the work of a congregation's musicians takes place "behind the scenes," and consumes much more time than the hour or so seen publicly on Sunday morning. Like the Minister, the Music Director's work entails administrative and organizational responsibilities that go beyond those of just directing the choir, arranging for instrumentalists, or playing the organ or piano. The following experiences are designed to help you gain knowledge of how the Music Director and the music program operate. The goal is to foster the development of a positive working relationship between you, as the Minister, and the Music Director of your church, as well as with other musicians.

- Choirs – of adults or children – are important activities for involving more people in worship services. To help you understand the commitment of time and talent that is made by choir members, attend two or three choir rehearsals, and follow a choir member through a typical Sunday morning.
- Discuss with the Music Director the planning of music for services: how far ahead are sermon and service topics needed to ensure that the music is coordinated with the worship theme, how does the Director select the music (choral, vocal solo, instrumental) for a service, and how far ahead do soloists or ensembles begin rehearsing music for a given service.
- Discuss with the Music Director what is involved, including amount of time, in the administration of the music program: reviewing and selecting music, ordering new music, recruiting volunteers for choirs or as soloists, attending staff meetings, working with the music committee, administration for other paid music staff, arranging for guest musicians, writing a column for the church newsletter, etc.

- Discuss with the Music Director and other music personnel (organist, pianist, regular soloists, etc. if the church has them) what is involved, including amount of time in their personal preparation of music for services; for the choir director, what preparation is done before beginning rehearsals with the choir; for the organist or pianist, how they select the pieces they will play, when and where do they practice, how do they handle rehearsals with soloists.
- Meet with the Worship and/or Music Committee as a way of observing their role in planning the worship life of the congregation; how they work with the ministers and musicians; how they participate as worship leaders.

Working with the Hymnbook

In most UU services, the foremost opportunity for the whole congregation to participate is in singing hymns or other group songs, and in responsive or unison readings. As you plan a worship service, you will want to select hymns that relate to and reflect on the themes and topics chosen for that service. You also will need to keep in mind that you want to select hymns that invite congregational singing, are familiar or may feasibly be taught, and enhance the experience of the service. The following activities are designed to help you become more knowledgeable about hymns and how to select them for services.

- Become familiar with *Singing the Living Tradition*
 - how the book is organized according to the *Purposes and Principles* of the UUA and the Service of the Living Tradition – hymns, readings, prayers, meditations, responses, etc.;
 - how to “read” the page, what information is given for each hymn, beyond text and music;
 - how to use it as a resource for sung responses, multi-cultural and intergenerational music, readings, rounds, children’s songs;
 - how to use the indexes and cross-references in the back of the book;
 - how to match meters of texts with meters of tunes.
- Discuss with your Supervising Minister, the Music Director, and other worship leaders how to select a hymn for its purpose, sing-ability and text.
- Our UU hymns often come with fascinating stories of their own. Obtain your own copy of *Between the Lines: Sources for Singing the Living Tradition*, and use it to become familiar with the background of hymns used in services, especially those that you select.
- Discuss with the Minister and Music Director how hymns are selected: relation of text to service or sermon topic, where each hymn should go in the service, what considerations are given for introducing new hymns, ratio of very familiar to not so familiar or new hymns.
- Arrange with the Minister and Music Director to select hymns for service for one month. Observe how those hymns worked or didn’t work. Analyze and reflect on the effectiveness of each hymn for its intended purpose. Begin to devise guidelines for selecting hymns.
- Discuss with the Music Director how to introduce and teach new hymns and expand the congregation’s repertoire.
- Lead a discussion group from the congregation on what hymns mean to them: their favorite hymns and why, what other associations do hymns carry for them.

Other Musical Activities

As you become familiar with your intern site's activities apart from worship services, look for other opportunities to make music, either formally or informally.

- Consider your own musical ability and how that may affect your approach to music in worship. Can you “carry a tune?” Do you pick up melodies easily? Do you feel you have a good singing voice? Do you read music? If not, you may wish to arrange for music tutoring from your intern site's musicians or from other music teachers. Such tutoring could include learning to read music, taking voice lessons that will help develop both your singing and speaking voice, or exploring music literature and history.
- With the Music Director or Organist/Pianist, lead a hymn sing. With a few musicians from the congregation, lead informal singing at a potluck dinner or other social gathering.
- Organize a group to sing at a hospital, home for the elderly, or other care facility.
- Participate in music activities associated with the R.E. program.
- Prepare stories for the children that include songs to be sung by the whole group. If you do not wish to lead the singing, arrange for help from adults or older children who can.

Publications and Other Resources

The Unitarian Universalist Musicians Network is dedicated to furthering the cause of music and musicians in UU churches and fellowships. Through publications, meetings, and a newsletter, the UUMN provides information and education about worship and music resources. Each summer, UUMN members gather for their annual continental conference. Theology students are encouraged to attend a UUMN conference. Scholarships are available to help defray expenses.

The UUA Office of Worship and Diversity Resources coordinates the development of worship resources and provides consultation on worship and music. It also provides information on copyright questions as they relate to UU hymnbooks, as well as other worship and music resources. The Director of Worship and Diversity Resources manages the development and evaluation of education resources for enhancing UU diversity.

The following books cover a variety of aspects about music, from general to specific to church music and hymnody.

Alexander, Scott, ed. *Salted with Fire: UU Strategies for Sharing Faith and Growing Congregations*. Boston: Skinner House Books, 1995. Chapter 8 – How Sweet the Sound: The Role of Music in UU Evangelism, by John E. Giles.

Fortunato, Connie. *Children's Music Ministry: A Guide to Philosophy and Practice*. Elgin, IL: D.C. Cook Publishing, 1981.

Funk, Virgil & Huck, Gabe, eds. *Pastoral Music in Practice*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1981.

James, Jacqui, ed. *Between the Lines: Sources for Singing the Living Tradition*. Boston: Skinner House Books, 1995.

Johansson, Calvin M. *Discipling Music Ministry: Twenty-First Century Directions*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1992. “Music ministry at its best is a cooperative venture among congregation, minister and musician. Raises “basic and primal questions.”

- Lovelace, Austin. *The Anatomy of Hymnody*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965.
- Parker, Alice. *Melodious Accord: Good Singing in Church*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991. Chapter titles include: The Need for Song, Good Singing Forges Good Congregations, A Different View of the Hymnal, Collaboration in the Community.
- Reagon, Bernice, J., ed. *We'll Understand it Better By and By: Pioneering African-American Gospel Composers*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.
- Routley, Erik. *Christian Hymns Observed*. Princeton: Prestige Publications, 1982.
- Routley, Erik. *Music Leadership in the Church*. Carol Stream, IL: Agape, 1984.
- Shaeffer, Edith. *Forever Music: A Tribute to the Gift of Creativity*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992.
- Schalk, Carl. *The Pastor and the Church Musicians: Thoughts on Aspects of a Common Ministry*. St. Louis: Concordia, 1984.
- Strong, Elizabeth, et al. *Messages in Music: Unitarian Universalism for Junior High*. Boston: Skinner House Books, 1993.
- Troeger, T. H., Doran, Carol. *Trouble at the Table: Gathering the Tribes for Worship*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992.
- Walker, Wyatt T. *Somebody's Calling My Name: Black Sacred Music and Social Change*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1979.
- Wallace, Robin K. *Things They Never Tell You Before You Say "Yes:" The Nonmusical Tasks of the Church Musician*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.