

Mentoring Your Parish's Inexperienced Musicians

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Panel: Jackie Gerlach, Adrian Smith

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully" (Romans 12:6-8).

Mentoring

Benefits of a mentoring program, formal or informal

1. Appreciates God-given talents
2. Encourages a spirit of service
3. Involves more people actively in worship
4. Promotes fellowship
5. Provides greater variety of instruments
6. Alleviates shortage of organists

Church musicians need to "reproduce"

1. Keep in mind the building blocks of success when you mentor an inexperienced musician: knowledge, ability, and desire. You can help at all three levels. You may increase their knowledge, encourage them in their ability, and promote their desire by involving them in worship music at their level. Those who are reluctant may be eager to join when they see and hear others like themselves participating in this way.
2. Find the hidden talent in your congregation, show an interest, and ask them to participate. Ask all ages. You may be surprised to find someone willing to pick up an instrument after years of non-use. If they show even the slightest interest, start by having them play with you privately to assess their ability. Encourage, encourage, encourage.
3. Invite everyone to join choir as a foundation. Make a special effort to contact new members as they join. Through the closer fellowship found in choir, one can discover more easily those who play instruments or may be capable of singing solos.
4. Remember the children and teens who may be taking lessons and invite them to participate as soon as they are ready. Have them play for pre-service for Christmas Eve. All children can sing. They also love to sing solos. Start by asking the ones who are capable singers. That can prime the pump so that many more want to do the same thing. I have worked with uncertain singers until they, too, are able to sing in key alone or with a partner in church.
5. Start small, very small, if necessary. Beginning instrumentalists can play the melody line of a hymn. Beginning organists can play one section of the liturgy at a time instead of waiting to play an entire service. One instrumental duo took 2 years to learn a moderately difficult piece for Easter — one measure at a time.

6. Have experienced singers and instrumentalists play or sing along with the inexperienced. The added support increases confidence and subsequently improves the tone.
7. Choose a non-threatening time in the service to play or sing for the first time. Usually the fewer the number of people in church, the higher the comfort level of the beginner. Therefore, a good place to start is to play or sing before the pre-service starts. Use the same song at a future date as part of the pre-service music. Sometime later, it can serve for the offertory or during distribution.
8. Ask the musician to play or sing for you while you commune.
9. Beginning organist can start by playing manuals only. Pedals could be added later on one or two notes. Then just keep adding more and more pedals.
10. Some congregations provide organ scholarships to pay for lessons. The financial burden is shared.
11. Encourage members to encourage the novice. This often happens naturally. Defend the beginner to those who complain about mistakes.
12. Use soloists to add variety to the Psalm, sing the Verse instead of speaking it, or during distribution. Instrumentalists can be added for support. Use children alone or in small groups to sing these parts of the liturgy as well.
13. Work with those who have the desire, but not the ability. Improvements can be dramatic. One enthusiastic choir member wanted to sing a solo, but many of his tones were uncertain. We drilled his simple anthem after choir and I made a tape for him to sing along with. He sang every day on the way to work with his tape. His service may not have been the best technically, but he gave his best. He was honored to serve by participating in worship.
14. *Worship Music: A Resource for Lutheran Keyboard Musicians* – [As of October 2002 three free issues have been mailed to every WELS organist from WELS Commission on Worship and Northwestern Publishing House. If you have not received on, contact NPH].
15. Use the WELS Commission on Worship resources for organists.
WELS Worship www.wels.net/worship/
2929 N Mayfair Rd
Milwaukee WI 53222
worship@wels.net
16. Those who have been mentored are very appreciative.

Other Opportunities

MLC Music Camps –

The camp is a one-week (Sunday evening through Friday morning) on-campus, resident camp usually held the first week of summer school. Students must stay in the dorms. It is for students who have just completed 6th, 7th, or 8th grade. They must have had at least 2 years of piano lessons. (Most usually have had 3-6 years).

Some campers have had a little experience playing organ or piano for church services, but this is not required to attend the camp. The campers receive a private lesson each day and work on a duet that is assigned at the beginning of the camp. In lessons they get coaching on a piece they intend to play in the closing camp recital, do hymn playing, and work on their assigned duet. If time permits, they are also coached on other pieces. They practice about 2 to 3 hours each day in 30 minute increments.

Students are introduced to digital keyboarding and work on preparing song accompaniments utilizing rhythm and automatic chord accompaniment features. They explore computer software related to music fundamentals and sometimes music history and composing.

The campers also have classes in Lutheran worship, music fundamentals, and music history. For example, this year they studied Brahms and his piano music.

The pipe organ may be introduced during the week by visiting St. John's and St. Paul's churches where the campers are given some basic information. We make no effort to conceal the idea that we are trying to encourage them to stay on piano so that someday they might consider studying organ and serving as a church organist. Organ lessons are sometimes given if students are interested. We do a full day excursion out of town on Wednesday of camp week.

Registration forms usually come out with the summer school information in fall or early January. Contact Prof. John Nolte <noltejp@mlc-wels.edu> or MLC Special Services.

American Guild of Organists

PipeWorks

An educational outreach program for children in grades 4-6. The program uses an interactive approach using a pipe organ. This two week experience utilizes a pipe organ to incorporate science, social studies, and music.

Pipe Organ Encounter

“Over a decade ago the American Guild of Organists (AGO) initiated an ambitious program of week-long summer camps for high-school aged students who have already developed a modest proficiency at the piano keyboard and who might be interested in expanding their skills to include performance on the organ--a most useful skill!

The summer camp, called a “Pipe Organ Encounter”, and sponsored by a local chapter of the AGO, provides a chance for young people to see, hear, play, and study a variety of organs and the music written for them. This educational opportunity, under the tutelage of professional teachers and organists, also acquaints participants with other teenagers who share their special curiosity about the “King of Instruments.”

Pipe Organ Encounter +

POE+ is a 4-5-day introduction to the organ for adult pianists with little formal training, who are interested in learning more about the instrument — especially helpful to those pressed into service as church organists. Handbooks are available from National Headquarters for those interested in hosting a POE+.

Resources

Web sites

American Guild of Organists	www.agohq.org
AGO Educational Resources	www.agohq.org/education/index.html
Northwestern Publishing House	www.nph.net
NPH keyboard music	www.nph.net/pdf/organ.pdf
Martin Luther College	www.mlc-wels.edu
MLC Music Camp	www.mlc-wels.edu/SpecialServices/musiccam.htm
Association of Lutheran Church Musicians	www.alcm.org

WELS Worship website

ARTICLES	www.wels.net/worship/articles	“Organ and Keyboard”
LISTS	www.wels.net/worship/clearinghouse	“Organ and Keyboard”
MORE LISTS	www.wels.net/worship/events	

Easy to Medium Keyboard Music

Worship Music: A Resource for Lutheran Keyboard Musicians [free from NPH].

The Creative Hymnodist: 20 Easy Hymn Settings for Keyboard and Optional Instruments; Kenneth Kosche

Advent – Christmas, NPH #270008
Christmas and Epiphany, NPH #270026
Lent and Easter, NPH #270016

Seven Binary Variations; Donald Johns, NPH #270017

Nine Easy Hymn Preludes and Hymn Settings for Organ; Edward H. Meyer
Book 1, NPH #270006
Book 2, NPH #270007
Book 3, NPH #270020

Ten Hymn Intonations for Organ Composer; Bruce Backer, NPH #270015

Four Hymn Intonations for Organ On Original Tunes Artist: Bruce Backer, NPH #270019

31 Intonations for the Psalms of Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal; Bruce R. Backer, NPH #270021

Allein Gott in der Hoh - Partita for Organ; Donald Johns, NPH #270011

Favorite Hymns for the Keyboard; Otto Schenk (1,2), Edward Meyer (3)

Advent hymns through Hymns of the Liturgy, NPH #270027

Word of God hymns through Nation hymns, NPH #270028

Hymns and Songs of the Liturgy, NPH #270029

19 Christian Worship Hymn Preludes and Introductions; Ron Besemer, Matthew Manthe, Karen Phipps, NPH #270032

A Heritage of Hymns; arranged for piano, Joanna Lange, CPH

13 Pieces for Treble Instrument and Organ; Allan Mahnke (he has others also) CPH

The Prelude/Accompaniment Series from Augsburg

Hymnal Companion for Woodwinds, Brass, and Percussion; Richard Rose, CPH

Description from CPH catalog: An acclaimed and practical series of reproducible instrumental accompaniments for traditional hymnody. Ideal for any church instrumental ensemble. Useful for virtually any combination of sounds.

Advent Christmas Epiphany, CPH 97-6710 \$25.00

Lent Easter, CPH 97-6714 \$25.00

Pentecost, CPH 97-6715 \$25.00

Reformation Praise, CPH 97-6716 \$32.00

Discussion Starters –

Gleaned from a district survey of organists

1. We need to involve young people as soon as possible-perhaps for Sunday School or during the offertory.
2. Music is not encouraged as much in the home today, so there are less younger organists.
3. While we strive to give God our best, recognize that organists will make mistakes at times. Some may not play because they are afraid of making a mistake.
4. Since some congregations have an abundance of organists, but others depend on one or two, create an "organist clearinghouse" to help congregations share and find the organists they need.
5. Workshops need to be geared for the small church, not for "performance".
6. If each organist encouraged one young person to begin/continue training, we would have more organists.
7. Not coming from an MLC background and lack of appreciation/support is largely why more people do not wish to step up and play organ.
8. Organists should be encouraged to listen to other organists for ideas.
9. Our culture is not kind to music. It is "sport-crazed", so the young people devote their time to sports instead of music.
10. More use of piano and other instruments should be encouraged.
11. A clearinghouse or website for organists to share thoughts and ideas would be nice.
12. In piano training, teachers can have students work on accompanying other instruments and voices.
13. Take care when using MIDI voices in place of instrumentalists who can use their God-given talents.
14. Congregations could pay for lessons for current and potential organists.
15. Lutheran elementary schools could allow piano teachers to give lessons to students during the school day to encourage future musicians.