

# **The Cantor**

**Leader of Song,  
Minister of Prayer**

**Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission**

## EDITOR'S NOTE

This booklet is designed to assist parish liturgy committees, clergy, and musicians, and, in particular, to encourage those in small congregations to be bold in developing their ministry of music from the resources they have in hand. Even the smallest community of Christians can raise up and support a leader of song to strengthen the congregation's common prayer.

This booklet is one in a series dealing with the work of the parishes of the Episcopal Church in the United States and the Anglican Church of Canada. It has been prepared by members of the Associated Parishes for Liturgy and Mission.

Text references are:

- BCP *The Book of Common Prayer* of the Episcopal Church, 1979.
- BAS *The Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada*, 1985.
- BOS *The Book of Occasional Services*, 1994
- OC *Occasional Celebrations* of the Anglican Church of Canada.

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# THE CANTOR LEADER OF SONG, MINISTER OF PRAYER

## A LITTLE THEOLOGY AND A HINT OF HISTORY

"When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Mark 14:26, Matthew 26:30). In the gospels' passion narratives Jesus sings a hymn with his disciples to complete their meal liturgy before he goes out to wrestle in prayer in the garden, preparing himself to face arrest, trial, and crucifixion. The gospel writers offer us that hymn, like the agony in the garden itself, to make clear that this is a death he "freely accepted that he might destroy death, and break the bonds of the devil and tread hell underfoot and give life to the righteous and set up a covenant,"<sup>1</sup> as so many other ancient eucharistic prayers insist. Singing a hymn of God's victory, probably Psalms 115-118, the second part of the Hallel (praise) psalms, at such a desperate moment, is a radical declaration of faith in the unfolding work of God.

The precedent of singing at moments of stark and awesome truth/was already ancient in Jesus' time. Exodus tells of the escaping Israelite slaves looking back over the sea they have just passed through, seeing all the might of Egypt's army swept away in their pursuit. Miriam leads them in singing and dancing the praises of God on the seashore.

<sup>1</sup> Liturgy of St. Hippolytus

Why does sung liturgical prayer mark the most central moments of God's mighty work of redeeming humankind? Why do people sing, rather than speak, of how God works to create freedom and joy out of the materials of human suffering and evil? Though singing at such moments may seem strange to our generation, which is losing its voice of song, the Bible offers images of the powers of evil quaking before the song of God's people. Scripture and tradition show us that when we face an awesome moment of choice, and then receive the gift of freedom and deliverance, the response of singing whole-hearted praise is most fitting.

Both the psalmist and the authors of two Christian epistles make the point with explicit admonition.<sup>2</sup> We sing psalms and spiritual songs not as a decorative luxury to beautify or enhance the essential language of our liturgy. It is the God-given voice of praise, the Holy Spirit praying within us, which rises in song. Our frequently expressed assumption that liturgical music is for times when it is convenient, when we can afford it, or when we can perform it "well enough", seems unthinkable. Music is the flowing current and the heartbeat of a praying community, a God-inspired means of enacting our prayer and praise in unity with our whole selves, body and soul.

The Psalter has remained the core songbook for Jews and for Christians, Catholic and Protestant alike, up to our own time. Even at those rare historical times when no other music was used at the liturgy, still psalms were sung.

Nonetheless, in modern times, most Anglican and Episcopal congregations enact at least some regular liturgies without music, explaining that a spoken service seems "simpler and truer" to some people, or that the community lacks a professional musician. This concept of liturgy without music would have been foreign to Christians in virtually every prior age and place. Recent projects, such as the Leadership Program for Musicians serving Small Congregations, that strive to build and support musical traditions in smaller congregations, have used training and collegial support

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 5:19 admonishes: "be filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord..."; see also Colossians 3:16.

to build up musical traditions in such congregations, and enable people to sing again. Many Episcopal and Anglican congregations have limited the congregation's sung prayer to hymns inserted in an otherwise said Eucharist. Many Episcopalians regard, as a mark of "high church" practice, to sing the great congregational prayers: Kyrie (Lord Have Mercy), Trisagion (Holy God, Holy and Mighty), Gloria in excelsis (Glory to God in the highest), a Responsorial Psalm, Alleluia, Creed, Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy), Agnus Dei (Lamb of God), and The Lord's Prayer, as well as ministerial prayers and dialogues. How shall we recover the transforming power of the voice of the assembled People of God?

Clearly, music-making faces a challenge in modern community life and culture. Some argue that our people simply don't sing together in ordinary life, so that the dry reading of an important text is culturally more natural to them. But who demands *saying* a national anthem at a ball game? Have any of us ever heard someone proposing that for lack of a professional musician, we should celebrate a friend's birthday by *saying*, "Happy Birthday to you! Happy Birthday to you! . . ." as a cake with candles appears? Outside church, are there any texts that people simply *say* together, besides the American Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag? At this time, Christians who continue to seek ways for their communities to sing are embracing yet another counter-cultural event in their life together.

Paleontology reveals that musculature developed for singing shaped the skeletons of our earliest ancestors. Human community was and is born in song. Music is a God-given wellspring of community and a natural channel of creativity.

In our time, great movements have had anthems that all could sing, such as "We shall overcome," sung in the U.S. during the Civil Rights movement. Liberation movements in China and South Africa also had their solidarity anthems. Singing together forges common vision and commitment. When we sing together, the inescapable physiology of sound production, and the aerobic activity of breathing together, move us immediately to "common inspiration." We hear the words we sing together differently, as we simultaneously offer our individual voices, and listen to each

another, to meld a common pitch, rhythm, and pacing. As a spiritual community sings together, not only does it accomplish this physical unity, but it also accomplishes the sharing of a deeply held belief, voiced and embodied by poetry and song, to make it memorable and learned "by heart."

As Christians, our shared spiritual practice of congregational song encourages us:

- ◆ To be attentive—listening to ourselves and to one another
- ◆ To breathe and share moments of silence in the rhythm of creating a dynamic, unified whole from our diverse energies and participation
- ◆ To accept one another's offerings gratefully and with thanksgiving
- ◆ To create an openness for us to feel, to hear, and to sense God's presence with us

John Merbecke composed and adapted music from plainsong for use with the first Book of Common Prayer in 1549 or 1550, that was intended to be sung by clergy and choir, though it was later adapted and sung by generations of Anglican and Methodist congregations. Even so, our current concept of congregational song had not yet been formed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The effort for liturgical reform in 1979, leading to the Episcopal Church's current *Book of Common Prayer*, did not produce an immediate and widely-welcomed musical setting of service texts for congregational singing. There were many reasons for this, but the result was that the actual re-formation of our liturgy moved forward slowly and sporadically. Many congregations ventured into "new" liturgy without singing new texts together or singing in new ways; without re-ordering the conduct of liturgy for shared ministerial leadership among presider, deacon, and other leaders; without removing barriers to create easy access to the Communion Table; without changing the audience-style seating that Christopher Wren favored for his 18<sup>th</sup> Century preaching halls.

Continuing commitment to the enlivening of our congregations' worship means addressing all these areas of liturgical practice. Much of what we will say here about music

and the congregation's leader of song poses challenges and opportunities in other areas of practice as well.

We use the word "cantor" to refer to a leader of song in the congregation. This role may be fulfilled by various parishioners, who only sing the verses of responsorial psalms, or by a musician who exercises a broader ministry of leadership, such as teaching and rehearsing congregational music and training other musicians.

## SHARED LEADERSHIP OF LITURGY: RAISING UP OR HIRING A CANTOR

Congregations with deacons and other leaders have begun to recover the ancient pattern of collegial leadership of the liturgy. This includes making good use of readers and lay assistants for communion. In such a collegial setting for liturgical leadership, the natural, ongoing life of the whole congregation shifts toward tasks and projects with multiple leaders and a more responsible sense of the active roles of all participants. The multiple roles of hosting and helping one another in a dinner party hint at how this works ritually. A liturgy where the people's voice is highly esteemed and nurtured likely will have multiple leaders besides the presider, by contrast to a large public meeting with a chairperson and several planned speakers, or to a variety show with a master of ceremonies, or to a conventional lecture with one teacher. The role of cantor, like the role of deacon, can help create new immediacy, spontaneity, and authenticity in the people's prayer.

*Who is this cantor? What if we can't afford a musician? Could our organist-choirmaster continue in that role and be cantor too?*

We can invoke Jewish and Christian precedent in entrusting the congregation's song to a leader. Rabbi Heschel assures us that the cantor in Jewish tradition was known as "the master of prayer." That reminder is essential to our discerning whom we should call to the role. As in any discernment of ministry, finding or raising

up the cantor begins with re-examining the congregation's vocation to prayer and realistically evaluating its God-given resources. As in any other leadership role in church life, when the statement "we can't afford it" is honestly true, the next question is: "who among us can do this work?" Some smaller congregations might conclude, perhaps too quickly, that their priest has the best voice and is the most confident singer, and should then be the cantor also. This solution should be temporary, if resorted to at all. It serves the singing — and the congregation's understanding that leadership in liturgy must be shared — far better to raise up, train, and shape a cantor.

Bringing congregational song and leadership to life may first require good teaching preparation from the priest and other leaders. As this is accomplished, candidates for cantor are likely to emerge. A cantor serving as a pastoral and liturgical leader will need the congregation's trust. A cantor should have a pleasant voice and enough intuitive understanding of the value of leading and supporting others in ordinary, non-musical interactions that he or she can learn to use the singing voice to support and call forth the voices of others. Simple confidence, gentle strength, and humility, are more inviting to others than a strident certainty that one's own voice is the best, or an anxious surrogacy that rushes in to fill the room with sound while hiding the effort others are making to find their place in the singing.

In a small congregation that is building a new music tradition, the obvious choice for cantor might insist, "But I'm not a musician. I can't even read music." If this is the right person, the priest and other leaders may need to help her or him see that the work begins where it begins, and that trusted friends and leaders are offering what they believe to be true ministry discernment. Such leaders might say "It appears to us that you are called to this work. If God sends us someone later on, who loves our liturgy and people as well as you do and whose musical skills could serve us all better, we can make another discernment together. For now, how can we help you know that we do trust you here? And are you willing to grow into the work?"

Minimally, a cantor needs to be able to sing a familiar song so that it is not pitched too high or too low for most people to sing together, and needs to be able to present the melody confidently enough to invite others in. In a congregation with little musical tradition and no obvious leadership, a place to initiate the discernment for a leader could be at informal hymn-sings or whenever people gather to sing popular songs, camp songs, or school songs uninhibitedly. At a hymn-sing, the priest and a few other leaders together can listen both for what hymns the congregation already knows and loves, and for what voices emerge from the group that people seem to count on for leadership.

As such a discernment process develops, congregations can begin by using music that everyone can sing by heart and without accompaniment. It is very important to repeat such comfortable music week after week to establish a sound of confident singing. *Old Hundredth*, *Amazing Grace*, Merbecke's service music, *Old Scottish Chant*, Karen Lafferty's *Seek Ye First*, or well-chosen pieces of renewal music, such as *Ye Who Dwell In the Shelter of the Lord ("Eagle's Wings")* that most parishioners know, can all be powerful tools for the first step from spoken to sung prayer. If there is no common repertoire, then teaching a few congregational acclamations or easy choruses, to be sung at the reading of the gospel or as the hymn of praise, could begin the building of a corpus of sung prayer.

In a congregation that is just beginning to build a tradition of singing prayer, it may be useful to ask various people to lead a psalm or favorite song, in the process of raising up and discerning who might be called to be cantor within the congregation.

A cantor needs enough confidence to lead with accurate pitch and rhythm. Even a very skilled cantor or professionally trained musician can make mistakes. A congregation needs to offer some space to allow for a leader's self-correction, not rushing to criticize or judge.

Confident and skilled leadership does not mean flawless leadership. Musicians aren't people who sing or play every note perfectly. They are attentive people who listen as they sing, and continue to make small corrections, ever improving, just as someone learns to steer a car well by means of practicing small corrections and adjustments.

People who have leadership gifts, but have never found their way to musical leadership before, may be surprised that conductors often describe their work as *dancing* so that the orchestra can follow the conductor's bodily movements. This dancing is subtle but very powerful in animating a congregation to song. New cantors are often startled to discover that they must sing slightly ahead of the congregation to keep people together and in a secure rhythm. This anticipation of the beat should be imperceptible to all but themselves. If they wait for people to get together, the slowest voice will gradually set the pace of singing so that it drags. The cantor must, quite literally, *lead* the music.

A cantor must be someone willing to take on a servant ministry within the congregation. Like a deacon, a good cantor is both a clear and inviting leader and a happy supporter and encourager. As people learn to pray in song with this leadership, they often characterize their appreciation by telling the cantor what a wonderful voice she or he has. Cantors must realize that, even though this may be true, it is not the most important aspect of their ministry. A good voice is largely a gift. An effective cantor is drawn to the servant ministry of music by the desire to be of help to others.

Ultimately, a cantor should have, or be working toward, these qualities:

- ◆ a clear understanding of the power of liturgy
- ◆ interest in its workings
- ◆ a growing understanding of scripture and liturgical tradition
- ◆ an intuitive or observed appreciation of how good liturgy touches and changes people

*How is the selection of a cantor different in a congregation with more resources? What about hiring someone for this role? What if a congregation already has an organist?*

In some congregations, with ample financial resources and enough talent in the surrounding community, it is possible to hire an experienced song leader, choral conductor, school music teacher, voice coach, or other professional musician who has the character described above, along with a willingness to commit to the congregation's music. In others, it is a matter of finding the right person already present in the congregation and encouraging that person through a process of learning and shaping existing gifts. The crucial questions remain the same in either case: Will this person

- ◆ embrace the congregation's voice with love?
- ◆ call it forth?
- ◆ encourage it where necessary?
- ◆ nurture and care for it?

Among the many singers, voice and choral teachers, and conductors, there are some superb professional musicians who have a real commitment to evoke the musical gifts of a congregation. Such people can transform liturgy. Vocal and choral skills are more vital than keyboard skills in a professional musician who will serve as cantor. A less skilled musician who is truly committed to congregational singing may make a better cantor than a highly skilled singer whose energies are primarily drawn to solo work, or to singing material rehearsed with only the congregation's most highly trained singers.

Sometimes the best available candidate may be a musician who has little experience of liturgical prayer or music, but shows potential to develop such skills. The calling committee will need to discern:

- ◆ does that musician have real willingness to learn and help create a genuinely liturgical tradition of singing?
- ◆ Does he or she recognize community singing to be a form of prayer?

Such musicians can grow into superb cantors as they find rich outlet for their gifts, and are touched by the integrity of the other expressions of the congregation's praying.

## *Who is to be in charge of music in the liturgy?*

Numerous tales of conflict between clergy leaders and musical leaders warn us of the high costs of ego on either side. Church law in our canons gives clear authority to the priest in the areas of liturgy including music, but the best use of priestly authority is to work with amateur and professional colleagues, and with the whole congregation, to create truly collaborative leadership. The canons intend collaboration.<sup>3</sup> An effective parish priest establishes clear, fairly simple expectations of the congregation's song-leaders, such as helping the congregation sing, and paying attention to the readings when selecting music. He or she then leaves a wide latitude of trust, and plenty of respect for the musicians' creativity. A sense of genuinely delegated authority is essential to the creativity and growth of a cantor or any congregational musician.<sup>4</sup>

There must be frank conversation about this responsibility. If the priest is to choose music, she or he is wise to collaborate closely with the music leaders, since ignoring them is a recipe for conflict. If the responsibility for music selection is given to the cantor, or to an organist/choirmaster, or to a committee that works with either type of musician, then regular pastoral feedback from the priest (with plenty of positive encouragement) helps develop relationships strong enough to address questions and conflict, as these arise.

<sup>3</sup> "It shall be the duty of every Member of the Clergy to see that music is used as an offering for the glory of God and as a help to the people in their worship... To this end the Member of the Clergy shall have final authority in the administration of matters pertaining to music... [and] shall seek assistance from persons skilled in music. Together they shall see that music is appropriate to the context in which it is used." Title II, Canon 6 of the Episcopal Church, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> Margot E. Fassler writes, "If the celebrant is responsible primarily for administering the sacraments and proclaiming and preaching the Word, the musician's responsibility is the Psalter, the songbook that sustains the congregational lives of the churches. A corollary to this thesis follows directly: the further church musicians are removed from the Psalms, and from responsibility for proclaiming them and teaching them, the more likely that vocation will be minimized." From "Psalmody and the Medieval Cantor: Ancient Models in the Service of Modern Praxis" presented at "Up With a Shout" at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music, New Haven, CT, January 2001.

Good collaboration requires that the priest, deacons, readers, organist/choirmaster, and cantor, maintain close communication. Even so, conflicts, misunderstandings, and uncertainties about just who is responsible for particular decisions within a delegated framework sometimes emerge. Dealing with hurt feelings, renewing and deepening respect, and using conflicts to further clarify each leader's area of responsibility, are essential to creating a strong spirit of collaboration, and providing the environment in which colleagues become willing to experiment, and to risk the failure that experimentation sometimes brings. For a beginning cantor, collegial collaboration and clear encouragement and support for that musician's additional learning and training are particularly crucial to foster growth in skill.

For a congregation that has a highly skilled and paid musician and multiple weekly liturgies, it is vital to raise up and train volunteer cantors. These may serve as substitutes when the professional is away, and lead singing in the daily office or other services and gatherings, and strengthen and support the work of the primary musician. With experience, both congregation and clergy come to value singing, and the presence of a cantor to lead song, in the smallest, as well as the largest liturgies.

## **EXERCISE OF THE OFFICE OF CANTOR**

It is the experience of some congregations that distinctively vesting non-ordained liturgical leaders makes them readily visible and immediately recognizable, and signals their role in leadership alongside clergy. Choice of vesture for musicians will depend on the way the congregation vests its readers, leaders of prayers, or ministers of communion. Vestments should be both lovely and practical. Since the cantor will be raising his or her arms to mark rhythm or at least give an initial downbeat, an alb with closely fitting sleeves may serve better than a surplice with very big sleeves.

The effective placement of a cantor and other musicians in the worship space is governed, (and sometimes impeded,) by architecture. In a Gothic revival building, or a Gothic arrangement

of furniture and space with a divided chancel, the choir stalls may be wonderfully placed for a small group of worshippers to do the office together, but leave choir and cantor too distant from the congregation to lead music effectively at a large liturgy. As the congregation becomes accustomed to the ministry of the cantor, there may be opportunities to experiment with seating the choir interspersed with the congregation to support it from within, gathering the choir separately only for anthems. Eliminating fixed choir pews in a divided chancel may make a more workable space for everyone. Thus the introduction of a cantor and a few leading musicians may draw a congregation eventually toward more wholesale change of the shape of their worship.

In any space, finding a way to make the cantor easily visible to as much of the congregation as possible is essential to the cantor's effectiveness. This might mean using the lectern as a place to lead congregational music. The dignity of that place is wholly appropriate to music leadership. On the other hand, in congregations where the presider preaches from the center aisle, that location in the midst of the people may carry significant authority and visibility, and be a good place for a cantor's leadership as well. Wherever the cantor is placed, there should be an easy communication among presider, deacons, and the cantor throughout the liturgy. Cueing one another, passing leadership back and forth, and collaborative trouble-shooting, create a genuine shared liturgical leadership.

If a cantor and an organist/choir director work together, good communication between them, by sight-line and by proximity, is also essential. In many congregations, the organist/choir director has been placed in a position fully visible only to the choir. This can present a serious problem if the organist/choirmaster is also serving as cantor and needs to be visible to the congregation. If a single position will not serve both purposes, the cantor need not feel awkward about walking from one location to another as needed. This movement should not appear to be a procession or ritual act, but should be graceful and purposeful, showing the musician to be at home in the church.

As we re-order old churches and design and build new ones in the coming years, good design must include careful attention to

places for cantors, (and deacons as well,) to speak to the whole congregation and lead the congregation's voices in their respective roles. Good design will take into account the need for an acoustic environment that allows enough resonance for the human voice to sing confidently, unaided by electronic amplification. In all but the largest and most acoustically difficult spaces, such amplification tends to place an unnecessary layer of technology between the cantor and the congregation's song. Much work, and many new discoveries, await us in our architecture as we revive an authentically shared leadership of liturgy. Meanwhile, the process of developing the role of cantor begins to re-shape the people, as he or she offers a leadership that models:

- ◆ a simple, sincere pleasure in singing alone and with others
- ◆ teaching without judgment
- ◆ praising and encouraging others
- ◆ giving thanks for the shared voice of the congregation as it emerges.

Should the cantor have opportunity to teach during liturgy? It seems natural and hospitable to provide opportunities to teach, either at the beginning when everyone is gathered or, (where it is necessary and helpful,) in the course of the liturgy just before the music is to be sung. Anglicans, especially clergy, are sometimes reluctant to allow leaders the authority to explain things or direct the congregation during liturgy. The assumptions behind this unnatural silencing of leadership seem to be that we're supposed to act as if we all know all aspects of what we are doing together. Clearly that is based on a fiction that we all "know the ropes" as well as monks do who attend multiple liturgies daily, and it creates a high barrier to strangers and visitors. None of us would treat guests at our dinner table this way. Finding the most effective and efficient way for the cantor to use his or her speaking and teaching voice in the course of the liturgy means we are valuing music and our guests properly, as gifts from God.

In congregations that do not yet have a de-briefing process for the whole liturgy leadership team, creating a cantor's role and developing the needed collaborative communication can provide the opportunity to begin such a regular process after each major

liturgy. A habit of discussing simple questions may become, over time, the powerful means of building a vibrant liturgy. Ask:

- ◆ What happened?
- ◆ What did you see?
- ◆ What did any of us do that some may not have noticed?
- ◆ What worked?
- ◆ What surprised us?
- ◆ What might we do better?
- ◆ What moments brought an especially vivid sense of God's presence?

Like the teaching in the liturgical setting itself, these questions should be asked within the team in love, in a spirit of appreciative mutual learning, and without blame or judgment. Communication breakdown, things that didn't get said that might have made a difference, and unclear lines of communication, are all useful indicators that there is work still to be done to build an effective leadership system among those entrusted with the congregation's prayer.

## NURTURING AND CONTINUING FORMATION

The ministry of the cantor is primarily a spiritual ministry, which secondarily requires musical technique. As a leader the cantor should be a master of prayer, whatever the particular style of her or his prayer may be. Like priest or deacon or master of ceremonies, a cantor must learn to pray the liturgy personally, while leading the prayers of others. If the cantor carries a high performance anxiety, and sees the music leadership role as only serving the prayer of others, it will be difficult for him or her to be attentive to what is going on in the congregation (especially among newcomers) and to the presence of God. Formation for a new cantor should include good mentoring, learning more of Scripture, theology, history, and liturgy as they relate to congregations at prayer, and deepening the love for God's singing people.

We do not have to look far to find rich traditions of choirs and instruments where trained, skilled musicians made their offering

alongside the congregation's singing. Notable examples include Bach's original cantata form with the congregational singing of chorale-hymns, Philip Neri's original inspiration for the oratorio tradition as a means of evangelizing a living culture of virtually universal musicianship, and choral folk traditions in Russia and in Africa. Even today, despite the rapid encroachments everywhere of our consumer-minded, spectator culture, we hear tantalizing choral sounds from cultures and sub-cultures around the world where more participatory musical traditions still live. Ninth century promulgation of a standardized Roman liturgy brought an end to most indigenous liturgical and musical practice throughout Christian Europe, but our own time is bringing a resurgence of local cultural variation and creativity to worship.

By the grace of God, new, patient, visionary musical leaders continually emerge. *Wonder, Love and Praise: A Supplement to The Hymnal 1982* is a work of love that demonstrates that our own American and European cultural traditions come alive as we sing together, using music from a variety of other cultures, both religious and secular, to enrich worship. Alice Parker travels and writes to teach us the heart-opening power of melody. The Iona Community is creating fresh music for the Church. André Gouzes, in France, has been making new unaccompanied congregational music for liturgy. The extreme simplicity of Taizé chant, with its melodic and harmonic predictability, has enabled some to sing their prayer for the first time, and has created a longing in many people for more and deeper experiences of sung prayer and shared contemplative stillness in music.

As with any organic entity, a growing ministry of musical prayer needs continuing nourishment and refinement. Nourishment for growth may or may not mean some programmatic expansion in a congregation. It is always desirable to deepen existing roots as well. The ultimate goal is a stable and engaging environment for people to pray the liturgy, with a shared leadership that values authentic, corporate prayer. Within such an environment, a congregation learns to lift its voice in praise during its moments of stark and awesome truth with increased confidence, harmony, and joy.