LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP IN A CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

A Thesis project submitted to
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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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ABSTRACT

A STRATEGY FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP IN A CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004

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A review of the current literature reveals much material on the topic of contemporary worship, but little that focuses on the practical steps for implementing contemporary worship in a local church. The purpose of this project is to develop a strategy for the implementation of contemporary worship. With the support of biblical and historical research, and the use of surveys sent to pastors and leaders in the Church of the Nazarene, a strategy was developed. This strategy is historically and biblically sound and helps to minimize the amount of conflict that is experienced in the implementation of contemporary worship.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Among the many things that take place in the church of Jesus Christ, one thing that affects almost everyone in one way or another is corporate worship. When people speak of “going to church” they typically mean attending a worship service in a local church. Consequently, what happens in the worship service has a direct impact on almost everyone in the congregation. It has an impact on the new people who may be visiting for their very first Sunday. It also impacts those who have been a part of the church for many years. Young and old, male and female, everyone is effected by elements of a corporate worship service.

This isn’t the case in other areas of the church. Substantial changes could be made in the nursery and only affect a small percentage of the congregation. Likewise, a new evangelistic thrust could take place and it would affect only those who chose to participate. When it comes to changes in the worship service, most people have little choice about whether or not those changes will involve

them. Therefore, change in the worship style of a church, regardless of how well intentioned it may be, has the potential to be very disruptive in the life of a congregation. This potential for conflict was illustrated in a conversation this author recently had with an associate in ministry. Significant changes had been made to the morning worship service of the church he attended. A more contemporary approach was being taken in worship by the pastoral staff in an effort to reach more people with the gospel message. This caused no small amount of frustration for some who were a part of this local congregation. The associate reported that some of the members of the congregation were openly boycotting the morning worship service to demonstrate their opposition to the recent changes in the worship service.

One might hope that the above mentioned church was an isolated incident. However, hardly anyone who is a part of a congregation today can fail to recognize the conflict that is often generated when churches make significant changes in the worship service. The titles of recent books in the Christian community such as “Worship Wars” by Dr. Elmer Towns, “Why I Left the Contemporary Christian Music Movement” by Dan Lucarini, and “The Worship Maze: Finding a Style to Fit Your Church” by Paul Basden, all point to some

of the challenges associated with implementing changes in a church's worship service.

If congregations are subject to confusion and conflict concerning changes in worship styles, many pastors feel equally pressed by what they perceive to be the need for change in the way churches worship today. With the rise of megachurches such as Saddleback and Willow Creek, that have great influence through their publications and seminars, pastors are more frequently exposed to "successful" churches that are succeeding with innovative changes in worship. Some of these megachurch pastors are quick to comment on the need for changes in worship. Rick Warren, the lead pastor of Saddleback Church, makes his thoughts on the need for change clear in the following quote:

> We invite the unchurched to come and sit on seventeenth-century chairs (we call pews), sing eighteenth-century songs (which we call hymns), and listen to a nineteenth-century instrument (a pipe organ), and we wonder why they think we're out-of-date. I'm afraid that we'll be far into the twenty-first century before some churches start using the instruments of the twentieth century.[1]

It is not just megachurch pastors who are calling for change in worship. Contemporary authors on worship point to the need for change as well. In her book entitled "Worship

[1] Rick Warren, Purpose Driven Church (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publlshing House, 1995), 290.

Evangelism", Sally Morgenthaler points out that "We can no longer assume that all or even most of the people seated in the pews comprehend what those of us leading worship are doing and saying."[2] For many the verdict is in. Changes must be made if we claim to have serious intentions of reaching lost people with the gospel of Christ.

We also live in a success-driven culture and pastors are not exempt from the pressure and the challenges that accompany the pursuit of successful ministry. "Success and failure is an issue we have to deal with, like it or not. The amount of stress on pastors to be successful is oppressive."[3] While the pressure to succeed may be clear, the challenge of defining that success and implementing changes to bring it to pass are not that clear, especially in the area of moving to more contemporary styles of worship.

The pastor who longs for a successful ministry may feel himself caught between the proverbial "rock and a hard place." If he identifies the need and begins to implement changes in worship that are focused on reaching out to the unchurched, he may very well reach the unchurched at the expense of angry church members already reached for Christ.

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[2] Sally Morgenthaler, Worship Evangelism (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publlshing House, 1995), 127.

[3] Ted Roberts, "The Mystery of Measuring Ministry," Leadership Journal, Summer 1992, 127.

However, if he fails to make changes in the worship style of the church and the church stagnates as a result, those same members may question his leadership ability.

Clearly there is a need for an effective strategy for implementing changes in the morning worship service. This project is presented with the intent of providing a strategy for implementing a more contemporary and effective form of worship with a minimal amount of conflict.

A. Background

The more immediate background for this project is found in the life of Harvest Community Church of the Nazarene in Lilburn, Georgia. Ten years ago Harvest Community Church, known as Parkview Community Church at the time, had what would be called a traditional style of worship. The rather large and imposing pulpit was flanked by a piano and an old organ on either side. Though the platform space was quite limited, the small choir dutifully forced themselves into a limited space to sing a partially rehearsed choir number each week. The order of service regularly included two hymns, a chorus, the pastoral prayer, special music and a sermon. The sound man looked through a window in the furnace room and attempted to

monitor the sound with aging equipment in great need of repair. While an overhead projector was used to project the words to the songs, the style of worship was hardly keeping pace with a county that had ranked as one of the fastest growing counties in America in the previous ten years. This growth was fueled by the growing technology sector located in a nearby area known as the “second silicon valley”. This was a community that was experiencing rapid change. However, the local congregation gave the appearance of being “left behind” and out of date. Not only had there been few constructive changes in worship, the congregation, which had only been in existence for 13 years, was in a state of decline and morale was running low. The church was at a pivotal juncture in its life. It could face the need for change in many areas, including the area of worship, or it could continue with current patterns and experience more decline and perhaps even failure.

B. Statement of the Problem

Nine years ago Harvest Community Church squarely faced the need for change. However, a strategy for meaningful and biblically-based change, particularly in the area of

worship, needed to be discovered and implemented. There were people in the congregation who longed for change and were ready to embrace radical change immediately. There were also people in the congregation who didn't see the need for any change. Sure, they wanted the church to grow, but they thought the worship style was fine. It met their needs and consequently they didn't understand why it wouldn't meet the needs of others as well. A strategy needed to be developed that was true to God's word and that could be implemented with a minimal amount of conflict among the church members. This project will outline that strategy as well as examine strategies used in other Nazarene churches to implement a more contemporary worship style.

C. Definition of Terms

The following definitions are given in order that the reader may have a clear understanding of the focus of this project.

Contemporary Worship: It is worship that uses the current styles, music and language of a particular group of people in order to communicate the gospel to them clearly and enable them to approach God sincerely and without

religious barriers. For the more specific focus of this project contemporary worship is concerned with the styles, music and language of the people of the Southeastern United States of America. That is the primary setting for the research for this project. Contemporary worship is an attempt to communicate to people with the appropriate styles, music and language that they use in their everyday lives and the focus of this project is primarily on the music and songs used in the worship of churches today.

Worship Leader: The person who assumes the primary responsibility for leading people to encounter God and express their love for him, primarily through music and singing, in the weekly Sunday morning worship service.

Lead Pastor: Also known as the Senior Pastor. This is the person with the primary leadership role for the local church. The terms “Lead Pastor” and “Worship Leader” will be used interchangeably throughout the paper. In some instances they will be the same person. In others there will be more distinct roles for each. However, it is important to note that the Lead Pastor’s primary leadership role extends to all aspects of the worship service.

Worship Band: The group of people who provide music for a contemporary worship service. They utilize modern instruments such as a keyboard, guitars, drums, etc.

Seeker Sensitive Service: The style of a Sunday morning service that consciously seeks to reach out to unchurched people by eliminating barriers while at the same time providing an atmosphere for regular church attenders to worship in as well.

Seeker Targeted Service: The style of Sunday morning worship service which is designed exclusively to reach unchurched people.

Traditional Service: The style of Sunday morning service that is designed to meet the needs of people who are already Christians and a part of a local church.

D. Statement of Limitations

This project centers in the idea of contemporary worship as it takes place in the morning worship service of a local church. The word “worship” certainly has a broad definition that can encompass every area of life. There is also an understanding of worship that deals primarily with what happens in the assembly of believers as they come together on a weekly basis. However, operating with the latter definition still brings far too much for a project of this scope to cover. Consequently, the following limitations much be acknowledged.

This paper does not seek to cover every aspect of worship. The primary focus is on the methods employed in the primary weekend worship service of a local church. Therefore the matter of personal worship, which is vital in the life of any believer, will not be discussed in this paper. The corporate worship of the church body is the main focus of this project.

This paper will not cover the sacraments. Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are vital elements in the worship of any congregation. However, apart from being touched on briefly in the survey, they will not be discussed in any detail in this paper.

This paper will not cover in detail the worship facilities. Certainly the condition of the buildings used for worship can have an effect on the worship experience of the believer. However, architectural considerations will not be dealt with in this paper in any extensive way.

E. Literature Review

Worship is certainly one of the popular topics among Christian authors and church leaders today. However, while books about worship are in an abundance, it is hard to find much in terms of a practical strategy for implementing

changes in worship that protects the unity of the church and furthers the gospel of Christ. Most of the books surveyed are more descriptive than they are prescriptive. They tell what is happening or ought to happen in a worship service, but often offer little help in describing how it can happen in a church that needs to change its worship style. While their value may be somewhat limited in terms of strategy, they will be an essential part of this project for the purpose of gaining a biblical and theological foundation for contemporary worship.

A number of works were found that gave historical summaries of worship in the church. Those dealing more particularly with protestant worship traditions have been useful in the research for this project.

A survey of the Doctor of Ministry Projects in the Liberty University Library revealed no projects on this topic. One project, “A New Five Year Plan for Planting and Developing a New Church in Houston, Texas”, might offer some guidance on contemporary worship, but since this is focused on a new church it would have a different focus from this project.

More recent articles in journals and magazines have also been used in this project. They give a more current perspective on the challenges and changes facing the

contemporary worship movement today. Articles dealing specifically with conflict resulting from change in worship styles and how to implement change effectively are easily accessed and provide excellent resources for this project.

F. Project Outline

The remaining chapters of this project will cover the following areas. First, the biblical basis for contemporary worship will be examined. This is essential for any project dealing with change and effectiveness in an evangelical Christian church. Second, the historical basis for contemporary worship will be explored. While a complete view of the history of the church cannot be examined, a summary of particular historical movements as they apply to the church of the Nazarene is essential for this project. Third, the project methodology and design will be explained focusing both on the process of implementation at Harvest Community Church of the Nazarene and the process of designing a survey to be completed by leaders in the church of the Nazarene. Fourth, there will be a detailed analysis of the church leadership survey. The fifth part will be a summary of the conclusions drawn from the project. The final chapter will be a strategic

plan for implementing contemporary worship in a church of the Nazarene.

Chapter Two

Biblical Foundations for Contemporary Worship

A. General Observations

Without a doubt worship is a central theme in the Bible. From the opening book to the final chapter in Revelation the subject of worship is mentioned nearly 250 times. It is both the privilege of those who enjoy close fellowship with God and a command for God's faithful followers to obey. In Abraham's offering of his son Isaac we clearly see that worship is not for the faint of heart. That same story also tells us that worship is costly. The story of Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus chapter 10 also reminds us that worship is not for the foolish, nor is it to be entered into without serious consideration. Jesus reinforces this truth when he states that "a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks." John 4:23 NIV

These few introductory verses quickly lend themselves to the support of contemporary worship today. The story of Abraham and Isaac reveals that coming to God in worship

will not always be easy. It points to the cost of worship that believers are asked to bear when they face changes in the worship service that cause them discomfort. They also point to the cost that contemporary worship leaders must face as they move beyond selecting tried and true hymns played hundreds of times by the two instrumentalists on the piano and organ to assembling a band, learning and teaching new songs, coordinating instrumentalists, assembling a multi media presentation and coordinating all of this on a Sunday morning in a meaningful and worshipful way. They point to the price of careless worship for believers and for churches. While the swift and harsh judgment upon Nadab and Ahihu is most certainly not present today one cannot help but wonder how many churches and individuals have suffered because they have not taken worship more seriously. The worship of God cannot be a place for selfish indulgence and disobedience. Jesus' words that the Father is looking for those who will worship him in spirit and in truth should at the very least challenge us as leaders to ask if the worship we lead is helping people to do this.

It has been said that a person can take just about any text in the Bible and make it say what he wants it to say. Certainly there is some truth to that statement and the

previously mentioned verses could certainly be interpreted differently by those who do not embrace the contemporary worship movement. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter will deal primarily with those scripture passages that describe the worship of God as being new, fresh and contemporary with the lives of the worshipers. Specific attention will also be given to the role of songs of worship in the nation of Israel and in the community of believers in Jesus Christ.

B. Old Testament Songs Of Deliverance

(1) Israel's Song of Deliverance at the Red Sea

Perhaps the first contemporary worship song recorded in scripture is the one sung by Moses and the Israelites after they saw the great deliverance God provided for them at the crossing of the Red Sea. Exodus 14:30-15:1 makes clear the reason for this new song:

> That day the LORD saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore. And when the Israelites saw the great power the LORD displayed against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD and put their trust in him and in Moses his servant. Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the LORD:"I will sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea." NIV

This new song of praise continues for another 17 verses and for good reason. The Israelites, who were recently helpless and harassed slaves in Egypt have just witnessed the mighty hand of God bringing a great defeat over the armies of one of the mightiest empires in the world at that time. This is not the time to sing the songs of yesterday, but to sing a new song of praise to God for the great things he has done. It is time to declare his present glory as seen in his present works of power. This new song declares that God is alive now. He is working to bring about his purposes now. He is changing lives now. Was this the first song about God the Israelites had ever sung? It probably wasn't. But this was the first time they had ever seen the "horse and rider hurled into the sea". God was moving and nothing but a new song could begin to express their praise to him. This same spirit is what contemporary worshipers in the 21st century are seeking to capture and proclaim today.

(2) Miriam's Song and Dance

It appears that right after the song of Moses the prophetess Miriam broke out with some "contemporary" worship of her own. Exodus 15:20-21 tell us that

> Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the LORD, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea."

One new song doesn’t seem to be sufficient. While the words are virtually the same, Miriam leads a group of women with tambourines in a joyous dance before the Lord. Here we see that there are times when worship cannot be confined to form and ritual. There are times when worship may overflow in a joyous and uninhibited celebration of the greatness of God. One doesn’t get the sense in this passage that Miriam’s “dance team” was disorderly and disruptive. There is the sense that these people were free and physically expressive in their worship of God. Many contemporary worshipers long to recapture that same spirit in worship today.

(3) God’s Provision of Water in the Desert

In Numbers 21:16-17 there is recorded a deliverance of another type. The Israelites are not delivered from a physical enemy, but from the enemy of thirst in the desert. The Israelites had been complaining about the lack of water, among other things. God graciously led them to a

well that provided for their needs and they sang a song of worship to the Lord for his gracious provision.

(4) Deborah’s Song of Victory

During the time of the judges of Israel Judges, chapters 4 and 5, records the story of the defeat of the Armies of Jabin, one of the kings of Canaan and an enemy of Israel. The Bible says that Jabin and his army of 900 chariots “had cruelly oppressed the Israelites for twenty years”. The prophetess and judge Deborah spoke to an Israelite named Barak and foretold God’s promise of victory for Barak and the Israelites. Barak’s hesitancy to lead the troops without Deborah resulted in the ultimate victory, the death of Sisera, the commander of Jabin’s armies, being given to a woman. In an unlikely and rather gruesome series of events a woman named Jael delivers the deadly blow to Sisera as he fled from the battlefield where his armies had been defeated. Judges, chapter 5, records the song of praise that was sung by Deborah and Barak after this victory. The contemporary song of praise is a summary of not only the battle but the national life of Israel under Deborah’s leadership. Its main focus is the victory the Lord brought against Sisera and his army and the heroic

deed of Jael. This victory is not just to be recorded in a book but sung about by the people of God.

> On that day Deborah and Barak son of Abinoam sang this song: "When the princes in Israel take the lead, when the people willingly offer themselves--praise the LORD! "Hear this, you kings! Listen, you rulers! I will sing to the LORD, I will sing; I will make music to the LORD, the God of Israel. Judges 5:1-3 NIV

Here again it is obvious that God has done a new thing among his people. He has reached out his mighty hand to deliver them from a mighty foe. This type of deliverance calls for praise. It calls for a new song from the people of God that celebrates and proclaims his greatness and his love.

(5) Prophetic Songs of Deliverance

The prophet Isaiah, in the latter chapters of the book, looks forward to the promised salvation of the Lord. He sees this great work of God as so powerful and significant that it demands a new song from God’s people. It overflows and will even burst forth from the mountains. As the following verses illustrate, this magnificent work of redemption calls for a new song from God’s people.

> See, the former things have taken place, and new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you. Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them. Isaiah 42:9-10 NIV

> I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you. Sing for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done this; shout aloud, O earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the LORD has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel. Isaiah 44:22-23 NIV
>
> …So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Isaiah 55:11-12 NIV

Perhaps it is not too much to say that these prophetic passages point to the contemporary worship of God's people in response to his great work of salvation. The salvation of the Lord has come and his people are commanded to sing to the Lord a new song. At the heart of the contemporary worship movement is not just an attempt to change the style to be more appealing to people, but a desire in the hearts of God's people to sing a new song that declares the great salvation of the Lord. The words to the popular contemporary worship song "Shout To The Lord" sound like a fresh fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah.

> Shout to the Lord all the earth let us sing,
> Power and majesty praise to the King.
> Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
> At the sound of your name.
> I sing for joy at the works of your hand,
> Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.
> Nothing compares to the promise I've found in you.
> Shout To The Lord, Darlene Zschech, Hillsong Music.

C. Israel's Singer of Songs

Any study of worship in the Old Testament and the songs of worship found there would be incomplete without serious consideration of David, Israel's worship leader. As Jack Hayford points out "There is no more insightful study in worship than the life and music of David. In worship he soars; with worship he wars."[4] The scope of this project will not permit a complete study of David's life and worship contributions. However, a brief summary will be given to point out his significance for worship today. More than a few contemporary worship leaders point to David as the best example for worship that can be found in scripture.

Before David's name is even mentioned in the pages of scripture his character is described in stark contrast to his predecessor King Saul. According to 1 Samuel 13:14 David is chosen because he is a man who is after God's "own heart". Perhaps nowhere is David's passion for the heart of God seen more clearly than in his songs of praise and worship of God.

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[4] Jack Hayford, Worship His Majesty (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2000), 130. Hayford's point is that worship is not an event isolated from the rest of David's life. Through worship David experiences the presence of God in all of his life.

It is not long before David is recognized as a musician with special ability. 1 Samuel 16:23 records that it is David's skill on the harp that would bring relief to King Saul when he was troubled by a tormenting spirit from God.

From the time of David's victory on the battlefield against Goliath, to his bringing of the ark into Jerusalem, there is little said about the place of songs of worship in David's life. The biblical record in 1 and 2 Samuel deals primarily with his victories in battle, his efforts to stay alive while he is pursued by King Saul and his eventual rise to become king of the entire nation of Israel. However, these events were certainly the fertile soil from which sprang many of the psalms, or songs of praise, that were written by David and recorded in scripture. While separate from the historical narrative, many of the psalms of David were clearly written during this time period. The following list includes those new songs that David wrote during this time.

1. Psalm 18-When the Lord delivered him from the hand of his enemies and from the hand of Saul.
2. Psalm 34-When he pretended to be insane before Abimilech.

3. Psalms 52, 54, 57 and 59-When he was pursued by Saul.
4. Psalm 56-When he was pursued by the Philistines
5. Psalm 142-When he was hiding in the cave

Did David know any of the other songs of Israel? As a skilled musician one would think that he most certainly did. But his circumstances called for new songs that gave fresh praise to God and expressed his present trust in him. They were contemporary worship songs in the most trying of times. The old songs were certainly sung by David, but the new songs enabled him to cry out from the depths of his heart with both his praise and his fears.

Perhaps the most significant event in David's life as it concerns contemporary worship today was the act of bringing the ark of God to Jerusalem. This was now possible because David had become king over Israel, had defeated the Philistines and had also established Jerusalem as his capital city.

This event begins with tragedy as David decides to transport the ark on a new cart instead of having it carried with poles by the Levites as the Lord had prescribed. The resulting death of Uzzah caused David to fear the Lord for a time and delayed his attempt to bring the ark to Jerusalem. Contemporary worshippers do well to

be cautioned by David’s presumptuous act of worship. Though the music was great and the energy was high, David had failed to obey the Lord. It reminds worshippers today that no amount of sincere enthusiasm can compensate for disobedience.

After a period of three months David once again set out to bring the ark to Jerusalem. He instructed the Levites to transport the ark as the Lord had prescribed. He had the Levites appoint singers and musicians to accompany the ark. A grand processional of praise went forth as the ark was brought to the city of David. Somewhere, but quite visible in the midst of it all, David could be seen dancing and leaping before the Lord. His wife Michal, the daughter of King Saul, was watching from a window and she so disliked what she saw in David’s dance of worship that the Bible says “she despised him in her heart” 2 Samuel 6:16.

Certainly David’s worship was contemporary if it was anything. His joy for the Lord could not be contained as it burst out in his dancing and leaping before the Lord. Nowhere is this unbridled enthusiasm for God condemned. There is an openness and sincerity seen in David that contemporary worshippers long to capture today. Though David is surrounded by many people it seems that he is only

aware of the Lord. While his worship takes place in the company of others, David is temporarily lost in childlike joy before the Lord.

David demonstrates that contemporary worship isn't just about new songs and lively music, but also about a sincere expression of praise that is unhindered by the expectations of others. David is clear in his response to his wife Michal that his worship dance was not for the amusement of others nor was it a foolish act to bring senseless humiliation on himself and his family. His dance of celebration was before the Lord and when it came to his worship before the Lord his personal dignity and humiliation were irrelevant. What is relevant is that he holds nothing back and worships the Lord fully from his heart, regardless of how it may look to others. This is contemporary worship. It is sincere worship without religious barriers. It is not simply the worship of yesterday revisted and practiced over and over again. It is the worship of a heart that is overflowing today. It is the worship that many of today's contemporary worship songs encourage such as the following song by Matt Redman.

When the music fades
All is stripped away
And I simply come
Longing just to bring

Something that's of worth
That will bless your heart

I'll bring you more than a song
For a song in itself
Is not what you have required
You search much deeper within
Through the way things appear You're looking into my heart

I'm coming back to the heart of worship
And it's all about you, it's all about you Jesus
I'm sorry Lord for the thing I've made it
When it's all about you, it's all about you Jesus
Matt Redman, Heart of Worship Kingsway's Thankyou Music , 1997

The completion of David bringing the ark to Jerusalem was when it was brought to the tent David had prepared. There he appointed Levites to minister before the Lord giving thanks and praise through music and song. He also wrote a new song for this occasion and committed it to those who were in charge of music and singing,(1 Chronicles 16:8-36).

When it comes to songs of worship there is no one else in scripture who stands out like King David. Along with the historical narratives his contribution to contemporary worship can also be seen in the book of Psalms. Perhaps it is here that we see his most lasting contribution to contemporary worship. Of the 150 psalms in the book of Psalms, 73 were written by David. Of those 73, there are 46 that are clearly meant to be sung to music.

Some have called Psalms the prayer book of the Bible and there is certainly justification for such a claim. However, when it comes to Kind David's authorship, Psalms may also be called the hymn book of the Bible, or the contemporary worship songbook of the Bible.

Working from the definition of contemporary worship as "worship that allows people to approach God sincerely and without religious barriers", the songs of David in Psalms are highly instructive for contemporary worshipers today. Here we see David modeling a sincerity that breaks free from the bonds of what some might consider appropriate in religious conversation. He speaks right from his heart no matter how difficult his situation may be. The opening verses of Psalm 22 display this kind of sincerity.

> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
> Why are you so far from saving me, so far from the words of my groaning?
> O my God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, and am not silent.
> Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the praise of Israel.
> In you our fathers put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them.
> They cried to you and were saved; in you they trusted and were not disappointed.
> But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people.
> All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads:
> "He trusts in the LORD; let the LORD rescue him.
> Let him deliver him, since he delights in him."
> Psalm 22:1-8 NIV

These words of scripture are undoubtedly quite familiar to any seasoned believer in Jesus Christ today. However, what many believers may not know is that this passage that Jesus quoted while he cried out to God on the cross was first placed in the heart of David as a contemporary song of prayer and praise to God. It was David who first cried out of the depths of his heart and probably sang out of the depths of his heart, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” This kind of sincerity is what contemporary worshippers seek today. And why shouldn’t they when it is so clearly modeled by Israel’s chief singer and composer of songs?

D. Psalms and a New Song

The phrase “new song” is mentioned nine times in the Bible and six of those occurrences are in the Psalms, (33:3, 40:3, 96:1, 98:1, 144:9, 149:1). Of these six occurrences, four are specific commands to “sing a new song” to the Lord. Of the remaining two occurrences one is a statement that God put a new song in the mouth of the psalmist and the other a declaration that the psalmist will sing a new song to the Lord. It is true that every admonition in the Psalms cannot be placed on the same level as the commands found in the decalogue or the commands of

Jesus in the New Testament. However, commands to sing a new song are clear and relevant to worshippers today. They are a strong biblical support for those seeking to implement contemporary worship in the church. They clarify the call to sing a new song to the Lord that declares his present liberating work in the lives of believers today.

It is interesting to note that nowhere in scripture are believers admonished to sing to the Lord an “old song”. Perhaps it is because no one needed to be told to sing an “old song”. People tend to hold on to the old songs, to long for “the good old days.” While the scripture clearly tells us to consider the past and remember the works of the Lord, longing for the past and the good old days isn’t always a good thing. The past is remembered so that God’s people may be clearly instructed for the present and the future. Even when God’s people have been rebellious and have forsaken the clear word of God, the answer God reveals is most often given in terms of a new thing that he is going to do. There are also times when God’s people clearly cling to the past because they are not willing to trust him for the new thing he has promised to do. This can be seen in the Israelites speaking of going back to Egypt after God had so recently delivered them and promised to bring them to a new land. Those leading the

contemporary worship movement believe that God is doing a new thing today in the hearts and lives of people and this new work of God calls for a new song of praise to him.

E. Praise and Worship on the Battlefield

Second Chronicles 20 records one of the most intriguing uses of a worship team in all of scripture. One can understand positioning musicians and singers at the entrance to the tent that housed the ark of God, but placing those people at the head of the army as they move into battle is a different thing altogether. However, that is exactly what King Jehoshaphat did as he faced invading armies from the east whose forces were far superior to his own. The appointed men were to sing to the Lord saying "Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever." (2 Chronicles 20:21 NIV). This was not a new song but it certainly was a new way to sing an old song. It was also a bold declaration that the battle belonged to the Lord and that he had promised victory to his people.

This passage is instructive for contemporary worship leaders today for two reasons. First, it reminds them to not be afraid of creativity when it comes to worship. Jehoshaphat's decision to place the worship team at the front of the army was creative, to say the least. Second,

it reminds worship leaders today to not be isolated from the thoughts and feelings of the congregation they are attempting to lead. The scripture clearly says that “After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army” (2 Chronicles 20:21 NIV). To suggest that everyone wholeheartedly supported this idea would probably be saying too much. However, Jehoshaphat was careful to build at least some consensus for such a significant change in his strategy for worship and war. If more worship leaders learned from his approach perhaps there would be more worship and fewer wars in congregations today.

F. Making the Word of God Clear

Nehemiah chapter eight records the reading of the Book of Moses to the people of God after they had returned from captivity in Babylon and had settled in their towns. Verses seven and eight state that the Levites “read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.” While commentators are not sure whether the Levites interpreted the Word of God for the people or whether they translated it into another language, the point that

concerns contemporary worship is that they made it "clear". Many, if not all, of these people had probably never heard the Book of the Law before that day. The commands may have sounded strange. They probably wondered how these ancient commands applied to their contemporary situation. They were not required to take a history class in order to understand this. Their worship leaders, the Levites, made the meaning clear to them.

This passage lends strong support to the approach of contemporary worship leaders today. They recognize that 21st century listeners struggle with the language of hymns, the style of music and liturgy from hundreds of years ago. While they acknowledge the same truths they also acknowledge the fact that the style and language from decades and even centuries ago may obscure the meaning for listeners today. The answer for contemporary worship leaders is to take a cue from the Levites in Nehemiah, chapter eight and make the meaning clear. Contemporary believers, who are asking God to strengthen them so that they may know him better, probably won't relate well to the following words of a great hymn of the church:

> Come Thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace.
> Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.

> Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.
> Praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it, mount of God's unchanging love. Come, Thou Fount, Robert Robinson

If verse one of this hymn wasn't challenging enough the beginning of verse two would certainly create confusion: "Here I raise my Ebenezer; hither by thy help I'm come". However, those same contemporary believers would clearly understand the meaning of the following contemporary song of worship:

> Day into night, you can turn the darkness to light.
> You can take a soul that was lost and turn it around.
> Lord, on my own, my heart can turn as hard as a stone.
> But you can make it tender again with your love.
> Stir up a hunger. Stir up a hunger in my heart.
> Nothing will satisfy me, nothing else will do.
> Stir up a hunger, a hunger in my heart.
> Stir up a hunger in my heart for more of you.
> Stir Up A Hunger, Paul Baloche

The leadership of the Levites in Nehemiah chapter 8 is sound guidance for contemporary worship leaders who want to make the meaning of the gospel message "clear" to people today.

G. New Testament Songs of Deliverance

(1) Mary's Song (Luke 1:46-55)

As the defining moment of deliverance for the people of God in the Old Testament was the Exodus, so the defining moment of deliverance for those in the New Testament was the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. As songs were sung

about the Old Testament deliverance so too were songs sung about the birth of Jesus Christ. Some may question the designation of this and other passages in Luke 1 as "songs" but Ralph Martin asserts that they clearly reflect early Christian hymnody.

> There is yet one further section of the New Testament literature where the influence of the Old Testament lyrical writing is in evidence: this is the Nativity and Infancy preface to Luke's Gospel. Four canticles in these two chapters (Lukei,ii) have a distinct poetic form and may be arranged in strophes as a species of early Christian hymnody which take us back to the Jewish-Christian Church.[5]

One can only imagine the fear, holy joy and anticipation that filled the heart of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Luke, chapter 1, records Mary's visit to her relative who also experienced an unlikely conception, though not so miraculous as Mary's. Elizabeth is six months pregnant with John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus Christ. Upon hearing Mary's voice the baby inside Elizabeth leaps and Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit. Mary apparently can hold her expectant joy no longer. Until this point she has been the humble and rather quiet servant of the Lord, but in verses 46 through 55 she breaks out in a song of praise to God. While this

[5] Ralph Martin Worship in the Early Church, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 43.

song is mostly composed of Old Testament allusions and quotations it is new in that it expresses Mary's praise to God in fresh and new ways.

(2) Zechariah's Song (Luke 1:68-79)

Zechariah's song springs from a two-fold deliverance. Upon the naming of his son "John", Zechariah is delivered from his inability to speak. This lack of speech was a result of his refusal to believe the prophecy spoken several months earlier concerning the birth of his son. Zechariah also sings a new song because he understands the significance not only of his son's birth, but also of the ministry of the one for whom he prepares the way, the coming messiah. No mere "Praise the Lord!" was sufficient for such a deliverance. A new and contemporary song of praise was needed to declare the faithfulness of God.

H. Practical Admonitions in the New Testament

When it comes to the subject of worship the small amount of material in the New Testament stands in sharp contrast to the wealth of material in the Old Testament. In the description of the early church in Acts 2:42 the singing of songs of praise to God is not even mentioned. However, it would be wrong to conclude, based on this passage, that songs of worship, even contemporary songs of

worship, were not a part of the early church. James 5:13 clearly instructs those who are happy in the Lord to sing songs of praise to him. And when Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi, Acts chapter 16 states that they were singing hymns to God. It is easy to conclude from these verses alone that singing songs of worship to the Lord was a part of the believer's lives in the early church.

The most direct teaching presented in the New Testament concerning songs of worship is to be found in Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:18-20. These are parallel passages and both mention three types of singing: psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. What precedes and follows these types of songs in each passage is also very important for it highlights the biblical support of contemporary worship songs today.

In the Ephesians passage believers are told to be filled with the Spirit instead of getting drunk on wine. Immediately they are told to "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs." Ephesians 5:19. It is hard to miss the connection between the Spirit-filled life and singing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. There is also the admonition at the conclusion of verse 19 to "Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord". The phrase

“make music in your heart to the Lord” makes room for great liberty and creativity in the area of worship and music in the church.

The Colossians passage is highly relevant for contemporary worshippers today for it points to the connection between music and the strength of a believer’s life of faith. Believers are clearly instructed to let the word of God dwell in them “richly” and then they are told how to make that happen. The word of God will dwell in them richly as they “sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” to God.

Those leading the contemporary worship movement have worked hard to combat the notion that the songs of worship in a Sunday morning service are merely the “preliminaries” and that the “main event” of the morning is the preached word. While the centrality of the preached word cannot be minimized in any evangelical church, it must be noted that the entire worship service is the main event. Therefore, songs of worship aren’t optional Sunday morning activities designed only for those who feel inclined to sing. Songs of worship are powerful tools God can use to speak his truth into the lives of his people. Songs of worship are also ways in which God’s people can experience his truth and his presence in their lives. It is worth noting that

when Billy Graham, one of the most effective evangelists in the history of the church, concludes a gospel message and gives and invitation he doesn't read one more passage of scripture. Rather he leads the people to sing the song "Just As I Am" to God. Through this song many thousands of people, perhaps even millions, have heard and responded to the truth of God's word. Contemporary worship is a vital part of the life of the church, for through it God can bring his truth into the lives of his people.

Paul mentions three types of songs in the above mentioned passages. First, he speaks of singing psalms. This clearly refers to taking the words of scripture and putting them to music. The contemporary worship movement has taken this command to heart and Jack Hayford comments that there has been "more singing of God's Word in the past 20 years than perhaps at any earlier time in Church history."[6] Sadly, there have been more than a few people who have criticized the singing of psalms in the church today.

The second type of songs Paul speaks of are hymns. These are songs that may be to the Lord or about the Lord and are usually more lengthy in composition than some

[6] Hayford, p. 167.

psalms or spiritual songs. Hymns can range from those that accurately speak of great biblical truths to those that describe a Christian experience that few seem capable of attaining in this life. The word “hymn” refers more to the lyrical content than the style of music. Those who would
seek to remove hymns completely from the worship of the church today would be wise to consider that such a decision is in violation of scripture. It is true that some hymns are centuries old and utilize a style of music that may be hard to grasp by people today. Since the words of the hymn are the most important part, one effective solution many have used involves making the music of the hymn more contemporary. This solution offers the truths of the great hymns of the church in a fresh format and also keeps a connection for church members who struggle with the changes of contemporary worship.

It is also worth noting that new hymns are being written as a part of the contemporary worship movement. A common criticism of contemporary worship is that it is shallow and does not give attention to the great truths of God’s word. However, while many new choruses fill our churches today and some of them do indeed reflect a weak theology, it is also true that new hymns are being written

that clearly proclaim the central truths of God’s word. Those truths come through clearly in the new hymn “In Christ Alone”.

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song
This Cornerstone, the Solid Ground
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm
What heights of love, what depths of peace
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease
My Comforter, my All in All
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In "Christ alone who took on flesh
Fullness of God in helpless babe
This gift of love and righteousness
Scorned by the ones He came to save
Till on that cross as Jesus died
The wrath of God was satisfied
For every sin on Him was laid
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground his body lay
Light of the world by darkness slain
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave he rose again
And as he stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me
For I am His and He is mine
Bought with the precious blood of Christ

No guilt in life, no fear in death
This is the power of Christ in me
From life's first cry to final breath
Jesus commands my destiny
No power of hell, no scheme of man
Can ever pluck me from his hand
Till he returns and calls me home
Here in the power of Christ I stand
Adrienne Leishing and Geoff Moore <u>In Christ Alone</u>
Thank You Music, 2002

The third type of songs Paul speaks of are “spiritual songs”. While there is some disagreement about exactly what kind of songs “spiritual songs” are, it is obvious that they are not the same as “psalms” or “hymns”. Most likely they are shorter songs or choruses that are spiritual by nature in that they speak of the Christian life, but may not necessarily be directly from scripture or deal with any great doctrinal truth. The contemporary worship movement has certainly taken this command to heart resulting in an abundance of spiritual songs being sung throughout the church today. The liberty and creativity exercised by those writing and singing spiritual songs has led to strong criticism. Simply put, some of the spiritual songs don’t sound very spiritual. However, the abuse or misapplication of a good thing doesn’t mean you should do away with a good thing. According to the Bible there is a place for spiritual songs in the church and through them believers can be strengthened in the word of God.

I. Worship in Spirit and Truth

Any consideration of the biblical view of worship must take into account the words of Jesus concerning this subject. Admittedly, they are few, but we must also acknowledge that they are sufficient. The only clear

instruction concerning worship that Jesus gives is in John chapter four. Here he says in verse 24 that true worshippers of God must worship him in spirit and in truth. Jesus is clear that it is the principles of worship that matter most and not the location or the methods. God is looking for people who will connect with their hearts as well as their heads when they worship him. Worship is about a heart connection with God and worship is also about the truth. What a strong endorsement for contemporary worship today! Worship leaders today are seeking to bring people beyond merely attending a worship service, singing a few songs and listening to a sermon to recognizing that they are the church that stands before God in worship. God doesn’t just want people to show up for a service. He wants them to open up their spirits to him and experience his life-changing truth in their lives. With that in mind contemporary worship leaders rightfully reach for new songs, music and methods that will help people to open their hearts to God and know his truth. According to the words of Jesus this is the kind of worship that the Father is looking for today.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORICAL BASIS FOR CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP

A. From New Testament Times to the Reformation

Any attempt to summarize 1500 years of any part of church history would merit some sort of explanation. The need to compress so great a time into a few paragraphs is understood when the following points are taken into consideration.

First, since the span of time being considered is so great there is only room in a project of this type to make summary statements concerning worship and singing in the early and medieval church.

Second, since this project is concerned with contemporary worship in the Church of the Nazarene, the primary focus will naturally be on more recent historical events as they relate to the church of the Nazarene today. The Church of the Nazarene has only been in existence for less than 100 years. Consequently, it is in a more general sense that the first 1500 years of the church relate to the use of contemporary worship in the church of the Nazarene

today. The events of the Reformation and following centuries have a more direct impact on worship in the Church of the Nazarene today.

Third, the rise of contemporary worship presupposes a freedom that was scarcely available to most believers during the first 1500 years of the church. It appears that freedom for such creativity as it concerns worship was continually restricted up to the time of the Reformation.

It is clear from the New Testament that singing songs of praise and worship was a part of the early church when they gathered together. There appeared to even be a freedom and spontaneity that characterized the worship of the first Christians. This was soon to change as the emerging church sought to give leadership and remain true to the faith in the coming centuries.

While it is impossible to make 100 percent accurate assessments about the worship of the emerging church, it is clear from the early documents that an established order and acceptance of church leadership was taking place that would influence the church for centuries to come. As early as the early second century Ignatius states that believers should regard the bishop as the Lord himself, they should follow the bishop just as Christ followed the Father and

that nothing should happen in the church without the bishop's approval.[7] By the third century further evidence of order and control by the church hierarchy is evident in the administration of Christian baptism. The spontaneity seen on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 people were baptized is a distant memory. Hippolytus writes that new converts to the Christian faith must proceed through a three-year instructional period before they can be baptized as a part of the church.[8]

This increasing control given to the leadership of the church continues throughout the first 1500 years of the church. The Medieval period saw the Roman church rise to become one of the most powerful forces in human history. Perhaps the following quotation best summarizes the controlling influence of the Medieval church in the centuries prior to the reformation.

> For a thousand years the church was the most important institution in Western Europe. All Christians whether emperors or lowly serfs were subject to it throughout their lives. Shortly after birth godparents were chosen for a child and he was baptized. During his early years the child was brought to church and instructed in religion. At about 12 years of age he was confirmed, and throughout his life as a Christian he was expected to confess his sins to a priest. The Christian was also to repent of his sins and do penance imposed upon him by the church through its clergy. He was expected to take Holy Communion; this,

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[7] Ray C. Petry, ed., A History of Christianity (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1962), 10.

[8] Ibid., p. 31.

> according to theologians, was necessary if he was to be in a state of grace. When a Christian was on his deathbed, he was supposed to receive "last rites" from a priest so that his journey toward salvation would be eased. In order to be married, Christians had to have a priest perform the ceremony, and the "engagement" preceding the marriage had to be announced in church. When a Christian made his will or for that matter participated in any act which required an oath, the Church became involved.
>
> The role played by the Church in religious matters was overshadowed by its role in medieval society in general. In some localities of Western Europe the Church was the largest landholder or landowner, and in other areas it was only one of the more prominent landed elements. Thus the Church not only commanded huge economic dependents,(serfs), who dwelled on its estates, but as the lords of huge landed estates Church officials, or their representatives, administered seigneurial justice. That is, the Church controlled secular courts on the lands it held. It also collected taxes, mustered armed forces, and carried out many other functions usually associated in modern times with secular governments.[9]

By the time of the Reformation this control had become so complete that the church and the state are virtually synonymous. Such complete control is hardly the soil in which the seeds of contemporary worship could grow. Allowances were made for changes in worship in different areas in which the church existed, but those changes were always under the supervision and control of the church leader of that area.

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[9] Bernard S. Bachrach, ed., The Medieval Church (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1972), 1.

It is significant to note that by the time of the Reformation public singing by the laity was forbidden in the church and had been for over 1,000 years.

> By the middle of the fourth century, music and the singing of hymns was entirely in the hands of the clergy. The clergy were no longer the servants or representatives of the people, but they held a mediatorial position as the channels through which the divine grace was transmitted to the faithful. The restriction placed on singing by the people was decreed to keep out heresies threatening the church. The Councile of Laodicea between A.D. 343 and 381 decreed: "Besides the appointed singers, who mount the ambo and sing from the book, others shall not sings in the church."[10]

The control of worship by the church hierarchy was absolute. This was clearly demonstrated in the Council of Constance of 1415 in which the reformer John Hus, was condemned are ordered to be burned at the stake. The Council of Constance also decreed that lay people were forbidden to preach, read scripture or sing publicly in the church.[11] Coupled with this was the fact that many of the worshippers were illiterate and the service was conducted in Latin, a language that was unfamiliar to most uneducated people of the day. Into this environment would soon step a man and a movement that would open the door for more

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[10] Harold Byron Hannum, Music and Worship (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1969), 56.

[11] Robert Webber, Worship Old and New (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 198.

freedom in worship and for the contemporary worship movement as we know it today.

B. The Protestant Reformation

While the Reformation is itself a movement far too large to cover in such a brief space, for the purposes of this project it will be sufficient to note some of the significant impacts of the main leader of the Reformation, Martin Luther. With his 95 Theses that he posted on the Castle Church door at Wittenberg on the Eve of All Saints Day in the year 1517, Luther burst onto the scene of church history like a bolt of lightning. His actions and his conviction went on to ignite a storm that would be felt throughout the Roman Catholic Church and the Holy Roman Empire.

Perhaps one of Luther's most significant contributions to contemporary worship is one that would come indirectly. It is probably best seen in Luther's response to the question asked of him at the Diet of Worms in 1521 concerning whether or not he would repudiate his teachings and writings. His response was as follows:

> Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason-I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other-my conscience is captive to the Word of God, I cannot and I will not

> recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.[12]

In his response Luther signals a major shift that the leaders of the church feared and sought to control. As a Christian the final authority for Luther was not in the leaders or pronouncements of the church.

The final authority was the written Word of God and the individual's interpretation of the Word. He was held captive not to papal decrees but to his conscience and the word. The significance and freedom of an individual before God and the Word was something that was foreign to the church. This new way of thinking opened the door for the freedom of expression that contemporary worshippers enjoy today.

Luther certainly had a direct impact on contemporary worship through his composition of contemporary worship songs in his day. His greatest contribution may have been his emphasis on congregational singing. Luther himself was a composer of hymns and within six years after the Diet of Worms he had published a hymnbook for congregational use. He was convinced that songs were powerful tools for explaining Christian doctrine and leading people to the

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[12] Roland H. Bainton, The Reformation of the Sixteenth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), 61.

Word of God.[13] Luther specifically targeted the youth of his day in both the musical composition and lyrical content of his songs. His hope was that these songs would "wean them away from love ballads and carnal songs and to teach them something of value in their place, thus combining the good with the pleasing".[14] So powerful was Luther's influence through song that one of his enemies at that time wrote, "Luther's songs have damned more souls than all his books and speeches."[15]

Another contribution of Luther to contemporary worship was his reluctance to establish a code of uniformity among churches as the Reformation spread. He feared that insisting on some uniform style of worship could lead to legalism and would fail to be relevant to the needs of the people in diverse churches.[16] This approach was meant to keep the door open for fresh expressions of faith and relevant forms of worship beyond the early days of the Reformation.

C. John and Charles Wesley

The revival movement led by John and Charles Wesley is

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[13] Rebecca Wagner Oettinger, Music as Propaganda in the German Reformation (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2001), 48.

[14] Ibid., 48.

[15] Robert Webber Worship Old and New, 199.

[16] Jan and Tim Wright, ed. Contemporary Worship (Nashville: Abingdon Press 1997), 37.

of particular importance in any study on worship related to the Church of the Nazarene. The influence of the Wesleyan revival is reflected in the following statement from the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene: "This Christian faith has been mediated to Nazarenes through historical religious currents and particularly through the Wesleyan revival of the 18th century."[17]

The Wesleys faced ongoing criticism for using means contemporary with their day to reach people with the gospel of Christ. They practiced such novel ideas as fervent outdoor preaching, enthusiastic hymn singing and extemporaneous prayers in their successful attempts to reach poor and uneducated people who felt unwelcome in the grand cathedrals of the day.

Charles Wesley wrote thousands of hymns. John Wesley preached to thousands of miners in open fields as they went to work. It is no secret that they would take popular melodies that the common people were familiar with and put new lyrics to the music in an attempt to reach the unchurched masses.

> They broke new ground by gearing popular melodies to gospel truth. It is said that William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, grudged the devil of any of the good tunes, by which presumably is meant those toe-tapping or nostalgic melodies that people

[17] *Manual/2001-2005 Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 2001), 14.

> inherit as folk songs or pick up from entertainers. The Wesleys soon discovered this source also.[18]

The Wesley brothers shared a similar conviction as the leader of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther. They believed music had the power not only to stir the heart, but to also convey the life changing truths of scripture.

> The hymnbook was for generations of Methodists the practical commentary on the Bible, the road map to heaven, the iron rations of the pilgrim, the weapon of warfare, and the *didache* of faith, experience and behavior. From the hymnbook they learned their theology and how to express it, for the hymnbook both expounded and expressed their evangelical faith.[19]

While the Wesleys were careful not to encourage excessive emotions in singing, the Methodist hymnbook was not a collection of formal and lifeless songs. It was also not a collection of complicated music which could only be sung by accomplished singers. Rather, it was simple in style and aimed at stirring the heart while at the same time informing the mind. "While John Wesley cautioned against excess enthusiasm he advocated, (strongly), the use of simple tunes that could be sung heartily. He strongly opposed formal and lifeless singing."[20] That was using the styles, methods and language of a particular group of

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[18] T. Crichton Mitchell Charles Wesley: Man with the Dancing Heart (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 1994), 242.

[19] Ibid., 135.

[20] Ibid., 243.

people in order to help them hear the gospel and approach God sincerely without religious barriers. That was contemporary worship.

D. The American Frontier Revival

As the Wesleyan Revival spread across the Atlantic to America, some of Wesley's distinctive traits did not make the journey. It was impossible to maintain consistency in small group fellowships on an ever expanding frontier. However, the contemporary nature of the Wesley revival remained and new forms of worship were discovered.

As the frontiers of America expanded so did the people of this new and growing country. Sparse populations spread across great distances made it impossible to worship with any kind of formality. And these adventuresome explorers were not given to formality either. The revival camp meeting style of worship developed as a result. This contemporary style of worship meant meeting in and using virtually any functional facility, even large tents, for a week or more at a time, to reach a largely unchurched people with the gospel message. The emphasis was on reaching and teaching as many as possible in a short amount of time. This style of ministry was very focused on the conversion of lost people.

One of the leading proponents of this style of ministry was Charles Finney. He encouraged fervent praying, enthusiastic singing and heart stirring sermons designed to lead the sinner to Christ. Even after he stopped traveling as an evangelist and settled down he kept these frontier methods in the two churches he led.[21]

Once again new songs of worship were present in this revival movement. A blind song writer by the name of Fanny Crosby wrote over nine thousand hymns and the titles such as "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior," and "Blessed Assurance, Jesus is Mine!" reflect the emphasis on a personal experience of salvation that was so prevalent at that time. Fanny recognized the power of songs and the importance of teaching people simple tunes that contain powerful Christian truths. While she was an accomplished classical musician she was not willing to put her own poems to music as she feared the compositions would be too difficult for the common worshipper.[22] Instead, she worked with musical composers who could write simple tunes for the poems she composed. One such composer was Hugh Mains who believed that

> the average person had to have a type of music for worship that could be understood and enjoyed. He felt

[21] Robert E. Webber, ed. Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship (Peabody, Massachusetts:Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.), 89.

[22] Bernard Ruffin, Fanny Crosby (United Church Press, 1976), 107.

> church music ought to be of the same type that is popular on the street, where the tune is of such a nature that the person singing it can predict what is coming next. [23]

E. The Beginnings of the Church of the Nazarene

The Church of the Nazarene had its beginnings in the American Holiness movement which began in the mid to late 1800's. There was certainly some overlap from the American Frontier Revival into the Holiness movement. They employed similar strategies for reaching people, such as camp meetings, fervent singing and an emphasis on the conversion of sinners.

The distinctive emphasis of the American Holiness movement was its emphasis on the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. It was their conviction that this second definite work of grace was meant to be a part of every Christian's experience of grace. Those professing this second definite work of grace usually were already in established congregations. However, they most often found a less than welcome reception from those congregations concerning this experience. These people started independent groups or holiness associations for the purpose of furthering this

work of grace. Similar groups across America eventually came in contact with each other and united to form the Church of the Nazarene.

As has been the case with other revival movements, this movement too produced new and contemporary songs of worship. These new songs both explained the doctrine and testified to the experience of entire sanctification. The new songs were necessary because the old songs could not convey the new work that God was doing in the lives of his people. New songs by the hundreds were published and welcomed as people sought to give expression to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

One of the most prolific songwriters in the early history of the Church of the Nazarene was Haldor Lillenas. He wrote contemporary songs such as “Glorious Freedom” and “Holiness Forevermore”. So powerful was this contemporary songwriter’s influence that a branch of the publishing arm of the Church of the Nazarene, Lillenas Publishing, is named after him.

The early Nazarenes faced significant opposition to the contemporary work of God’s Spirit that they so enthusiastically testified to in song. This opposition both drew them together as a fledgling denomination and set

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[23] Ibid., 110.

them apart as a distinctive group of believers. However, the contemporary songs that defined the young movement would, in the coming decades, become the sacred songs that must be sung and many felt they could not be replaced. These songs identified the church. The practice of bringing new songs into the church, and singing the old songs less often, or perhaps not at all, presents an enormous challenge for some in the church today.

F. Contemporary Worship in Recent Decades

Students of contemporary worship have pointed to several significant changes in American culture that have fueled the contemporary worship movement over the past several decades. These changes in American culture have led to great changes in the way churches worship today. Robert Webber points out that "more attention has been given in the twentieth century to the deliberate renewal and revision of Christian liturgy than in any previous century in church history."[24]

One of the significant changes that has altered the style of worship music is what some have called the "de-churching" of America. Prior to World War II a stable and significant part of Americans belonged to some church

[24] Robert E. Webber, ed. Twenty Centuries of Christian Worship, 105.

fellowship. Therefore, most Americans were familiar with “church” songs and the usual way churches did worship. However, since that time, an increasing number of Americans are not connected to any church fellowship. While many Americans claim to be Christian, many of that same group are not a part of any church family. The result of this is that an increasing number of Americans are very disconnected from what takes place in the traditional Christian worship service. They are completely unfamiliar with the language that is used in a worship service and many are biblically illiterate.[25]

The result of this change is that America is becoming more of a mission field than a nation of Christians. In light of that, many church leaders have seen the need to understand the culture they are trying to reach and adapt their methods in order to more effectively reach lost people for Christ. They have recognized that the style and methods used for decades by many churches and enjoyed by many congregations are no longer relevant to people today. The Church of the Nazarene has declared America a “Mission Field” and has put a significant emphasis on Nazarene churches becoming “missional” churches in America today.

Another change in American culture has been the

growing distrust of authority. This lack of trust in authority and leadership in our country blossomed during the 60's and 70's and is reinforced in the new millenium with the high publicity of corporate scandals that line the pockets of the leadership at the expense of the common worker. Extensive media coverage of the rise and fall of prominent Christians has also eroded the sense of authority in churches. In this atmosphere of distrust, church leaders have had to learn to reach out in relevant ways that invite people to come discover the truth that is offered in Jesus Christ. Contemporary worship invites people to come and be a part of the service. It invites them not through unyielding and authoritative statements of faith, but through openness and participation. It invites them in a way that says "Let's take this journey of faith in Jesus Christ together", instead of "You had better repent before you burn in hell."

Another significant change in America has been the rise of Rock and Roll music.[26] This music is louder, faster and with instruments that traditionally had no place in the churches of America. This music had little use for an organ, the instrument probably most often associated with

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[25] Jan and Tim Wright, Contemporary Worship, 11.
[26] Ibid., 12.

church music. Rock and Roll music and the various offshoots from it became the music of the youth of America. Even country music has become so influenced by this style of music that at times it is hard to tell the two apart. Rock and Roll and similar styles of music fill the airwaves 24 hours a day in America. People listen to it as they travel to and from work in their vehicles and in their homes. Contemporary worship leaders in the last few decades have followed the pattern of those who have led changes in worship throughout the centuries of the church. Instead of isolating themselves from this form of music, they have used it as a tool to reach an increasingly unreached group of people. This has brought about significant conflict in churches as people who have already been reached with the gospel have reacted with confusion, skepticism and even accusation toward those who are leading the contemporary worship movement and those who would seek to implement these changes in the churches they attend.

In spite of the conflict, contemporary styles of worship appear to be here to stay. Perhaps it is because those who lead the movement do so, not first of all because of matters of taste and style, but because of their convictions that are based on their understanding of the gospel message. Their conviction that they are following a

biblical pattern for outreach is reflected it the following quote from Tim and Jan Wright:

> The heart of the gospel proclaims that God made himself accessible to us. Instead of demanding that we somehow find him, God came to us in the person of Jesus. Rather than expecting us to work through all the barriers that keep us from him, God climbed into our world. By becoming human, God took on the trappings of secular culture. He wore the clothes of the day. He spoke the language of the people. He ate their food. He visited their homes...In other words, God completely immersed himself in the culture and the human predicament that he wanted to change-without compromising himself or his message. He made himself accessible by becoming like the people he wanted to reach.[27]

[27] Ibid., 19.

CHAPTER 4

PROJECT DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

A. Overview

This project will examine the process of implementing contemporary worship in a local church of the Nazarene from two perspectives. The first perspective will be that of a local church that took the journey from a traditional worship style to being a church that utilizes a contemporary style of worship today. Harvest Community Church of the Nazarene will serve as an example of how one church went through this process successfully. The second perspective will be in the form of a survey that will be sent out to a select group of leaders in the church of the Nazarene.

B. Harvest Community Church

The first step in implementing contemporary worship at Harvest Community Church was to clarify the mission and purpose of the church and of the Sunday morning worship service. The focus of this service would be the foundation for any needed changes. The pastor and the church board began to ask serious questions about the Sunday morning

worship service such as: “Who is the Sunday morning worship service for, unbelievers or those already in the church?” and “What does the answer to that question say to us about the style and structure of that service?” Simply asking the questions wasn’t easy and answering them was even more difficult. However, working through these initial questions and listening to the concerns of the leaders laid the groundwork that would support the changes that would be made in the worship style of the church.

Another key in this initial stage was to identify and work with key leaders who recognized the need for change in the worship style of the church. These leaders were introduced to books, tapes and conferences that promoted contemporary worship. The intent was not to simply adopt the style of another church, but through exposure to other styles, to enhance the creative ability of the worship leaders of Harvest Community Church. This was a lengthy process and through it the pastor and worship leader both learned that implementing contemporary worship at Harvest Community Church meant much more than just being contemporary in terms of instruments, sound reinforcement, current technology and song selection. It also involved the difficult process of discovering the style of

contemporary worship that best fit the character and purpose of this congregation.

Without a doubt the main ally for the Pastor in this process was the Worship Leader. It was vital that the Pastor and Worship Leader shared the same heart and vision for the church, especially as it concerned worship. They met to discuss ideas about worship, pray about worship, and attended worship conferences together where they could be exposed to new ideas. The Worship Leader did not make changes just to please the Pastor in matters of style. Rather, the Worship Leader, along with the pastor, carried a burden for all of the people to experience more of God’s presence in their lives as they opened themselves up to more contemporary forms of worship.

Integral to incorporating change in worship was the process of creating a mindset for growth and change in the congregation. The church had lost several families and was running about 90 people in morning worship attendance. While everyone wanted to grow, few understood the changes that would occur as a result of growth. The pastor taught often on the connection between growth and change. Gradually the people began to understand that there would be no substantial growth without significant change in the

church. This understanding made it easier to implement changes in the worship style of the congregation.

As changes were made they were presented to the congregation as “experiments”. This language was used for several reasons. First, it alleviated some of the fears people had concerning worship changes that were new and somewhat uncomfortable. When standing for all of the singing was introduced, the idea that this was an “experiment” helped people to know that this wasn’t an irrevocable change. Second, seeing these changes as experiments gave people more freedom to comment on the impact of these changes on the ministry of Harvest Community Church. Comments from the congregation were welcomed and therefore church members felt that they had an active part in the process of change. Third, viewing changes as experiments helped the worship leaders to keep a humble posture before the church congregation. A conscious effort was made to not put the Lead Pastor and Worship Leader in the position of being experts and consequently seeing everyone else as novice worshippers who needed to be instructed in the right way to worship. The entire church was on a journey and that included those who were leading in the process of change. Consequently, a greater spirit of unity was maintained throughout the process of

implementing contemporary worship at Harvest Community Church. The leadership team and the entire congregation understood that they were on a journey together to understand the kind of church they needed to be and the worship style they needed to embrace in order to effectively reach out to the lost in their community.

Changes in the worship style of the church were always made slowly. There was no attempt to bring about a drastic and instant overhaul of the worship service. While drastic and instant changes in worship can give the appearance of bringing a church to a more contemporary worship style, it often is only the “appearance” and not the “reality”. It was recognized that many congregations have contemporary worship forced upon them by the pastor and worship leader. However, in these situations it is often the case that while the instruments, music and song selections are all contemporary, the church is also quite full of conflict. The slow but deliberate approach used at Harvest Community Church was described by the Lead Pastor as “incarnational worship”. Incarnational worship refers to the process of first coming to where people are in worship in order to lead them to where you want them to be in their worship style. This descriptive term obviously has its meaning derived from the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. In

Christ God comes to us where we are in order to bring us to a new place. The Lead Pastor and Worship Leader were careful to not belittle or devalue the worship style they were seeking to change. This slow implementation of change undoubtedly lowered the level of conflict and in reality virtually eliminated conflict during the transition from traditional to contemporary worship at Harvest Community Church.

An example of this slow approach to change can clearly be seen in the introduction of the first “contemporary” instrument to the platform. As was mentioned earlier, Harvest Community Church had the traditional piano and organ setup on the platform. The organ was very old and did not produce a clear and pleasing sound. When a new Yamaha Keyboard was purchased for the church by one of the members a decision had to be made concerning how to introduce this instrument. Replacing the aging organ with the keyboard would create a very different appearance on the platform for the congregation. A decision was made to take out the “guts” of the old organ and place the keyboard into the organ cabinet. By maintaining the platform appearance the keyboard was introduced without conflict or confusion. The pipe organ sound on the keyboard actually sounded better than the old organ. New voices were

introduced and as people welcomed this new sound and the instrument that made it the door was opened to remove the old organ cabinet and place the keyboard on a proper stand on the platform.

Throughout the process of implementing contemporary worship at Harvest Community Church the Lead Pastor understood and accepted his role as a worship leader in the church. While his task was not to functionally lead in every aspect of the worship service, in his heart and actions he had to accept his pastoral role of leading people to a new way of worshiping God. It was critical for the pastor to communicate to the people that the changes in worship were more about substance than they were about style. The congregation was not asked to simply tolerate a new style of worship for the sake of being a “contemporary” congregation and hopefully reaching more people for Christ. Rather, the Lead Pastor lovingly encouraged the congregation, both young and old, to open themselves up to new and meaningful ways of worshipping God. The new style of worship wasn’t just for the lost, but was also for those who were already “found”. Learning a new song wasn’t just for the young or the unbeliever, but was a way that the people of God could express their trust in a God who is alive and doing new things in the lives of his people

today. A more lively and joy-filled worship atmosphere reminded everyone that God is alive today and that he fills the lives of his people with joy. Above all, the people were reminded that the changes in the worship style of the church were not about trends or current fads, but were rooted in the very mission and purpose which was to reach as many people as possible for Christ.

C. Survey of Nazarene Churches

In order to present a strategy that could be used in a variety of settings it was necessary to get information concerning contemporary worship from more than one church. For this reason a survey was constructed and sent to Nazarene churches in the same geographical area as Harvest Community Church of the Nazarene.

This survey was designed to accomplish several things. First, it would assess the current style of worship in the churches surveyed. Second, it would determine which churches have implemented a more contemporary worship style over the past 10 years. Third, it would assess how that style was implemented and what effects this process had on the life of the church. The data received from these surveys would help to clarify which strategies were most

effective in implementing contemporary worship in a church of the Nazarene.

CHAPTER 5

EVALUATION BY SELECTED CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE PASTORS AND LEADERS

In order to understand the impact of contemporary worship in local Churches of the Nazarene a survey was created and mailed to pastors and leaders in the Church of the Nazarene in the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee. These states were chosen because they were in the same geographical area of the country and would therefore be more likely to have churches that shared common challenges concerning the implementation of more contemporary forms of worship. Therefore, these survey responses should give a good indication of how churches, and the leaders of those churches, are dealing with changes in worship.

In order to get a more balanced perspective on the issue of contemporary worship in the local church the decision was made to include more than just senior pastors in the survey mailing. As was stated in the introduction of this paper, worship affects everyone in the church. A senior pastor’s perspective may be quite biased in this matter for a number of reasons. The Senior Pastor may have

a strong growth mindset and be convinced that a more contemporary approach to worship is necessary regardless of the cost. Such a leader may tend to overlook or minimize the level of conflict felt by the changes he may implement. The Senior Pastor of a large congregation may lead in such a way that he is not as connected to the thoughts and feelings of the congregation as a whole. The short tenure of Senior Pastors that is present in the church today may also lead to a lack of connection between the Senior Pastor and the people he leads. These and other factors that could be listed point to the validity of including other church leaders in the mailing of the survey.

A total of 400 surveys were mailed to pastors and leaders in churches of the Nazarene in the selected states. Three of these surveys were returned by the post office due to an inadequate address. This left a total of 397 surveys from which to gather information for this project. A sample of this survey and the letter that accompanied it can be found in Appendix A.

At total of 185 responses were received from the surveys that were mailed. Of the 185 responses that were returned, three were returned blank. An explanatory note accompanied them explaining the reason they were not completed. Two other surveys were completed but the

results were not applicable to this project. One was completed by a chaplain who served on a military base. This would not qualify as a survey from a local church of the Nazarene. The dynamics of ministry on a military base were obviously quite different from those in a local church. The other was completed by a traveling evangelist who obviously based his responses on his experiences with many different churches in different areas. It would be impossible to interpret the data from such a broad range of churches.

Valid responses were received from 180 survey recipients. This number represented 45 percent of the original mailing list from which information could be gathered concerning the presence of contemporary worship in local churches of the Nazarene.

A. General Information

The general information section of the survey revealed that the surveys were completed mostly by senior pastors. A total of 141, or 78% of the completed surveys, were filled out by senior pastors. A total of 69% of the survey respondents had been in their current church for at least 3 to 5 years. This high percentage should increase the

probability of getting a more accurate response concerning the effects of contemporary worship in the church.

Of the surveys that were completed and returned 58% represented congregations of less than 100 in Sunday morning worship service attendance. Another 20% were received from congregations that averaged between 100 and 200 in Sunday morning worship attendance. An additional 12% of the completed surveys were from congregations averaging 200 to 300 in Sunday morning worship attendance. Of the remaining surveys 7% were from congregations that averaged between 300 and 500 in Sunday morning worship attendance and only 4 surveys were from congregations averaging between 500 and 1,000. There were no churches that averaged over 1,000 in Sunday morning worship attendance that responded to the survey. One completed survey did not include a response in this section. The survey results were analyzed to determine if congregational size had any impact on the implementation of contemporary worship methods.

The survey was also analyzed to determine if the average age of the congregation had any impact on the implementation of contemporary worship. Only 5 of the completed surveys represented congregations with an average

age between 21 and 30. One third of the completed surveys represented congregations with an average age of between 31 and 40. Another 39% of the surveys represented congregations with an average age of between 41 and 50. In addition to these another 19% of the completed surveys represented congregations with an average age of between 51 and 60. Only 6 surveys represented congregations with an average age of over 60. There were also 3 surveys that indicated no response to this question.

Another factor taken into consideration by the survey was the ministry setting of the congregations. The surveys were analyzed to determine whether or not the ministry setting had an impact on a church's willingness to implement changes in worship and the level of conflict experienced as a result of these changes. Of the 180 completed surveys 22% were from congregations located in urban areas. The greatest part of the returned surveys, 43%, were from congregations located in suburban areas. Another six percent were from churches in inner city areas. In addition to that 22% were from congregations in rural areas and 10 surveys were marked "other". Two of the completed surveys did not have answers for this question.

B. Worship Style

In attempting to understand the style of worship in Nazarene churches the second part of the survey asked questions concerning the style of worship in local churches. Of the 180 responding churches eight percent classified their current worship style as “progressive contemporary”. Another 12% classified their current style of worship as “contemporary”. The largest portion of the responding churches, 44%, classified their current worship style as “blended”. Another 36% of the churches classified their current worship style as “traditional”. One church did not respond to this question on the survey.

This section of the survey revealed that there had been significant changes in the worship style of local Nazarene churches. Only one church indicated that its style of worship was “progressive contemporary” 10 years ago. There were also only two churches that classified their style of worship 10 years ago as “contemporary”. The survey indicated that 11 percent of the responding churches classified their worship 10 years ago as “blended”. The overwhelming classification of worship style 10 years ago among those churches that responded was “traditional” as

81% indicated this on the survey. Eleven surveys did not have a response to this question. Of those eleven surveys without a response to the question of the worship style of the church 10 years ago there were no respondents who had been at those churches longer than 5 years. Two possibilities for the lack or response are that the person completing the survey had no understanding of the worship style 10 years ago or that the responding church was a church that had been started within the last 10 years.

Analysis of the survey indicated that there was a connection between the size of a congregation and the amount of change that had taken place in worship over the previous ten years. Small congregations indicated the least amount of change in the worship style over the previous 10 years. Of the 105 responding churches that averaged less than 100 in morning worship 79% were “traditional” in their worship style 10 years ago and 50% are still traditional today. Of those churches under 100 that did make changes the most significant shift was toward a “blended” style of worship. Whereas ten percent of churches under 100 were “blended” in their worship style 10 years ago, 41% of churches under 100 are classified as “blended” today. The changes in other categories are very small. Of the responding churches of this size 2 were

“contemporary” and 1 “progressive contemporary” 10 years ago compared with 5 that are “contemporary” and 4 “progressive contemporary” today. Changes in the worship style of a smaller congregation would appear to be more difficult to implement or perhaps not as necessary.

Only four churches responded that averaged 500 to 1000 in morning worship. Three of those four churches had a “traditional” style of worship 10 years ago compared to one out of the four churches reporting a “traditional” style of worship today. Ten years ago one of the churches was “blended” in its style of worship and today two of the four churches is “blended” in its style of worship. Only one of the four churches in this size category reported being “progressive contemporary” in its style of worship. The small number of churches responding in this size category make it difficult to draw conclusions about the changes in worship during the past 10 years.

The congregations reflecting the most change in worship style over the past ten years were those averaging between 100 and 500 in morning worship attendance. There were 13 completed surveys from congregations that averaged between 300 and 500 in morning worship attendance. All 13 reported that they were “traditional” in their worship style ten years ago. However, only three of those same

congregations reported being “traditional” today. Of the remaining 9 churches 4 reported being “blended”, 5 reported being “contemporary” and 1 reported being “progressive contemporary” in their worship style today. Churches in this size category reflected the greatest amount of change with 46% of the churches moving from “traditional” to a “contemporary” or “progressive contemporary” style of worship over the past 10 years.

There were 21 churches averaging 200 to 300 in morning worship that responded to the survey. Of these 21 churches 19 indicated that their style of worship 10 years ago was traditional. Only one reported being “blended” and the other church did not include a response in this category. Today only 4 of the churches indicate that they are “traditional” in their worship style while 12 of them report that they are now “blended”. Another 4 of the churches are “contemporary” and 1 church is “progressive contemporary” in their style of worship today.

Churches averaging 100 to 200 in morning worship attendance also reflected a significant amount of change in worship style over the past 10 years. Nearly all of the churches in this category, 34 out of 36, were “traditional” in their style of worship 10 years ago whereas only eight are “traditional” today. Ten years ago 1 church was

"blended" in its worship style compared with 19 that are "blended" today. Of the remaining churches 8 report being "contemporary" and 1 "progressive contemporary" in their current style of worship.

This information indicates that there is a correlation between church size and the amount of change that has taken place in the worship style of the church over the past 10 years. Churches with a larger Sunday morning worship attendance were more likely to have changed their worship style over the past 10 years than were churches with smaller worship attendance. Further analysis reveals other characteristics in larger churches that are factors in implementing changes in the style of worship.

Larger churches have more resources to utilize in implementing worship changes. Perhaps the most significant resource is the human resource of a paid worship leader on staff. All 13 of the churches in the 300 to 500 size category had a paid worship leader on staff. Of these 13 churches with a paid worship leader 9 of them indicated that the worship leader assumed an integral role in leading the church through changes in its worship style. Likewise, of the 21 churches in the 200 to 300 size category, 17 of them reported having a paid worship leader on staff in the church.

Another characteristic of larger churches that is a factor concerning changes in the worship style is the average age of the congregation. None of the 13 churches in the 300 to 500 size category reported having an average age of over 50 years old. Nearly 70%, (nine churches), of the churches in this size category reported that the average age of the congregation was less than 40 years old. Of the 21 churches that reported in the church size category of 200 to 300 only three reported that the average age of the congregation was over 50. Another 43% reported an average age of the congregation between 31 to 40 and 43% of the total also reported an average age of the congregation between 41 to 50 years old. No reporting church in the category size of 200 to 300 indicated an average age of the congregation of over 60 years old.

An examination of those churches with less than 100 in attendance in the Sunday morning worship service reveals a very different breakdown concerning the average age of the congregation. Only 31% of the reporting churches in this category indicated an average age of the congregation as less than 40 years old. In addition to this only 36% of churches in this category reported an average age of the congregation between 41 an 50 years old. Another 31% of the churches in this category reported an average age of

the congregation of over 50 years old. Six of the churches in this category reported an average age of the congregation of over 60 years old. Of these six churches five reported no change in the worship style of the church over the past 10 years. One of the six changed from “traditional” to “blended” in its style. One church was “blended” and remained “blended” and the other four churches were “traditional” and remained “traditional” in their worship style.

It is clear that the age of the members of the congregation is a significant factor when it comes to changing the worship style of the church. The larger the church the younger the make up of the congregation. The more youthful the congregation is the more likely there will be more people who will embrace more contemporary forms of worship. It is also worth noting that of the four churches that did report from the category of 500 to 1000 in morning worship attendance, three reported an average congregational age of between 31 and 40 and the other reported the average age as between 41 and 50 years old. All four of these churches indicated that they had embraced significant changes in worship over the past 10 years.

Further analysis of the data received through the survey indicates that location is also a significant factor

when it comes to making changes in the worship style of a church. The survey identified the following four main locations of churches: inner city, urban, suburban and rural. Of the four locations in the survey inner city churches demonstrated the least amount of change in the 10 year period covered by the survey. Of the 11 inner city churches that responded, 10 were classified as “traditional” in the worship style 10 years ago and 8 are still “traditional” in their current style of worship. Only one church reported a “blended” style of worship 10 years ago and today three of the churches are “blended” in their worship. Fewer inner city churches changed their worship style over the past 10 years and those that did change their worship style did not change significantly.

Rural churches reflected only slightly more change than did the inner city churches. Rural churches changed from 92% using “traditional” worship styles 10 years ago to 51% using “traditional” worship styles today. The most significant change was in the number of rural churches that moved from “traditional” worship to “blended” worship. Of the 39 churches that responded only two were “blended” in worship 10 years ago. The survey indicated that 18 of the reporting rural churches are “blended” today. Only 1 rural

church reported that it was currently using a "contemporary" style of worship.

Urban churches reflected an amount of change that was most comparable to those churches in rural areas. The main difference can be seen in the variety of change. Of the 39 churches that responded from an urban location, 79% were "traditional" in their worship style 10 years ago compared to 44% that are "traditional" today. Of these same churches 13% were "blended" in their worship style 10 years ago compared with 44% that are blended today. There were no churches in this category that reported their worship style as "contemporary" 10 years ago. The survey reported two churches in this category as "contemporary" today. There was one church that was "progressive contemporary" ten years ago compared with three churches now reporting "progressive contemporary" as their style of worship.

The churches with the greatest amount of change in worship style were those located in suburban areas. Of the 79 churches that indicated this location on the survey, 75%, or 59 churches, used "traditional" worship styles 10 years ago. In ten years the number using "traditional" worship styles decreased to 20% or 16 churches. Ten years ago 15% of the churches used a "blended" style of worship compared to 43% of the reporting churches using a "blended"

style today. Only 2 of the reporting churches were “contemporary” 10 years ago while today 17 of them use “contemporary” worship. None of the churches reported using a “progressive contemporary” style of worship 10 years ago and 11 report that they are “progressive contemporary” in their worship today.

The survey also revealed that a significant number of churches use instruments in worship that are more characteristic of contemporary worship. Nearly 50% of the responding churches reported using an electronic keyboard in the worship service. Nearly one third also reported using guitars and drums. Slightly less than one third of the churches reported using trumpets, saxophones or other brass instruments.

While contemporary elements are very present in Nazarene churches the survey also indicated the use of more traditional elements of worship among most of the responding churches. There were 154 churches that indicated “hymn singing” was used at least once a month in their worship service. In addition there were 156 churches reporting that regular “scripture reading” was also used. Another 95 churches reported using “choir specials” regularly and 124 of the responding churches indicated that

"personal testimonies" were also a part of their worship services at least once a month.

The survey was originally designed to determine how many of the reporting churches had a weekly Sunday night worship service. This service has long been a traditional part of the weekly schedule of Nazarene churches. Due to a clerical error this question was not included on the survey when it was mailed. Regrettably this omission was not detected until the surveys were returned and in the process of being reviewed.

Nearly every responding church utilized some form of technology to assist in the worship service. Of the 180 churches that responded 172 reported that they used some sort of sound system. There were 130 that reported using wireless microphones. There were also 126 that reported using some sort of projection device, either a video or overhead projector, in the worship service. Over one third of the churches used a computer system. A total of 89 churches reported using VCR's and 58 reported using DVD players. Only 18 reported that they used large screen televisions.

There were 83 churches that reported using a "praise team" on a weekly basis in the weekly worship service. Obviously many of the churches that would classify

themselves as “blended” or “traditional” use a praise team, a style that is more often associated with contemporary worship. Along with this there were 55 of the churches that reported having a paid worship leader. In 54 of the churches members of the church regularly suggested new songs to sing in worship. These results indicate that while larger churches with paid worship leaders are more likely to pursue more contemporary forms of worship, the desire for contemporary worship is by no means limited to only large congregations with paid worship leaders.

C. Evaluation of Changes

In an attempt to understand the process of change in worship in Nazarene churches the survey was designed to address the effect of change on the church as well as how that change was implemented. There were 106 churches that responded to this section of the survey indicating that there had been significant changes in the worship style of the church in the last 10 years. This information was consistent with the responses to questions eight and nine earlier in the survey which indicated that at least 65 of the responding churches reported no significant change in their worship style over the past 10 years. Of the 106 churches that did report significant changes in worship 57%

indicated that those changes coincided with growth in the attendance of the morning worship service. The remaining 43% indicated that there was no growth that coincided with the transition to contemporary worship.

A variety of methods were used to facilitate the transition to contemporary worship. “Preaching on worship” was used by 55 of the responding churches. The method used most frequently was the introduction of worship songs as specials in the service by the choir, a soloist or some other means. There were 70 churches that reported using this approach. Of the reporting churches there were also 30 that used a worship band for special music and 13 that provided special teaching on contemporary worship. Other methods that were used included starting a new church, using a worship team occasionally, prayer and one response indicated that the church split over the issue of contemporary worship.

With any change someone has to assume a leadership role. In most of the reporting churches the Lead Pastor assumed a significant role in bringing about contemporary worship changes in the church. There were 42 churches that reported the Lead Pastor as the key person of influence and 27 reported that the Worship Leader was the key person of influence concerning contemporary worship changes. Another

27 churches reported that the Lead Pastor and Worship Leader both worked together to influence change. Of the remaining churches two reported that a lay person and one that a staff member was the key person of influence. One church reported that the Lead Pastor and a staff member other than the Worship Leader worked together to influence contemporary worship changes. There were also nine surveys that did not have a response for this question.

The last part of the survey addressed the level of conflict generated in the church as a result of changes that were made in the style of worship. Of the 106 churches that responded 18 indicated that there was no conflict in the church as a result of changes in the worship service. There were 35 that reportedly relatively little conflict associated with the changes. Another 31 reported that there was a noticeable but manageable amount of conflict. In addition to this 9 churches reported a significant amount and 6 churches a great amount of conflict generated as a result of the changes in the worship service. There were also 7 surveys that did not include a response to this question.

The survey revealed that the greatest level of conflict was confined to churches of less than 100 in morning worship attendance. Fully 100% of the churches that

experienced “a great amount” of conflict averaged less than 100 in Sunday morning attendance. However, this does not lead to the conclusion that size is the main factor in the level of conflict experienced by congregations. Of the churches experiencing no conflict as a result of the changes 68% were churches that averaged less than 100 in Sunday morning worship attendance. Likewise, there were no churches that averaged less than 100 that indicated they experienced a “significant amount” of conflict as a result of the changes. Of churches that experienced “relatively little” conflict 53% were churches averaging less than 100.

According to the survey church location was also not a strong indicator of how much conflict was experienced as a result of implementing a more contemporary worship style. Of those churches indicating a “significant” to a “great amount” of conflict 73% were in suburban areas, 13% were in urban areas, 7% were in inner city areas, and 7% were in rural areas. Of those churches indicating “a noticeable but manageable amount” of conflict 45% were in suburban areas, 23% were in urban areas, 23% were in rural areas, 3% were in inner city areas and 6% did not list a location. Of those churches listing that they experience “relatively little” to no conflict at all 47% were in suburban areas, 23% were in urban areas, 17% were in rural areas, 4% were

in inner city areas and 9% of the churches did not list a location.

One significant factor did stand out according to the survey data. The amount of change that a church sought to implement over the past 10 years had a direct impact on the level of conflict the church experienced. This can best be understood if the responses in questions eight and nine of the survey are understood in terms of steps in the transition to contemporary worship. For example, a church that was traditional in its worship style 10 years ago but is currently blended in its worship style would have moved one step in the past 10 years. Likewise, a church that was traditional in its worship style 10 years ago and is currently progressive contemporary would have moved 3 steps in the past 10 years. With this understanding in mind the survey results reveal that 53% of the churches that experienced a great amount of conflict started with traditional worship and moved at least two steps in their worship style. Of the churches that experienced a noticeable but manageable amount of conflict 26% started with traditional worship and moved at least two steps. Only 11% of the churches that experienced little to no conflict started with traditional worship and moved two steps.

Churches that were traditional in their worship style 10 years ago and only moved one step experienced significantly less conflict that those mentioned above. A total of 53 churches reported little to no conflict in their transition to a more contemporary worship style and 64% of these churches reported that they were traditional 10 years ago and moved only one step in their worship style. Of those that reported a manageable amount of conflict 45% were traditional and moved only one step in their worship style. Those churches that experienced a significant to great amount of conflict had only 27% of the churches moving one step away from a traditional style of worship.

The survey indicated that there was a definite pattern to the way the conflict was felt among the various age groups present in the churches. Seventy percent of the churches responded that the age group of 12 to 20 was “highly accepting” of the changes which were made to move toward more contemporary worship. Another 22% of the churches said this age group was “accepting” of the changes. One church listed this group as “tolerant” of the changes and 9 of the surveys had no response for this group. No church listed this group as “not very accepting”

or “very unaccepting” of moving toward contemporary worship.

Beginning with the next age group listed, Age 21 to 30, there is a definite pattern that continues throughout the survey responses. As the ages considered increase the survey responses move away from “highly accepting” toward “tolerant”, “not very accepting” and “very unaccepting”. The older the age group considered the less acceptance there is for changes in the worship service that move toward contemporary worship as the following table demonstrates.

Table 1. Contemporary Worship Acceptance

	Highly Accepting	Accepting	Tolerant	Not Very Accepting	Very Unaccepting
Age 12-20	74	22	1	0	0
Age 21-30	68	27	2	0	0
Age 31-40	51	40	4	1	1
Age 41-50	25	61	10	2	2
Age 51-60	11	44	32	6	5
Age 60 +	4	28	40	14	11

This data clearly reveals that age is a significant factor in the acceptance level of contemporary worship. It also demonstrates that the age of the congregation is not necessarily a limiting factor for those churches seeking to be more contemporary in their style of worship. Over 70 survey responses indicated that those people in the 60 and over age group in their churches were at least “tolerant”

of the changes that moved churches toward contemporary worship.

Most of the surveys rated the overall response of the congregation as “accepting” or “highly accepting”. Of the total responses 29 were “highly accepting” and 55 were “accepting”. There were nine surveys that rated the overall response as “tolerant” and six were rated as “not very accepting”. Only two surveys rated the overall response as “very unnaccepting”.

These survey results from churches in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee provided useful information for understanding the role of contemporary worship in the church of the Nazarene. The conclusions reached from this information along with the information presented in chapters One through Four will be presented in Chapter Six of this project.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Many conclusions regarding a strategy for implementing contemporary worship in a church of the Nazarene can be drawn from the material presented in this project. The research into the biblical and historical foundations of contemporary worship provide a solid starting point for understanding contemporary worship today. The description of how one church successfully implemented contemporary worship along with the survey results from churches of the Nazarene in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee point to the particular challenges facing churches seeking to implement contemporary worship today.

While there is certainly turmoil surrounding contemporary worship in the church at large today, and in the Church of the Nazarene as well, this project points to conclusions that clearly validate the practice of contemporary worship in the church. A second set of conclusions were made concerning the presence of

contemporary worship in the Church of the Nazarene today. Another set of conclusions revealed the significant challenges that churches and leaders must face if they plan to change the worship practices of their church to a more contemporary style.

A. Conclusions Supporting the Validity Of Contemporary Worship

This project has demonstrated the fact that there is no small amount of confusion, frustration and even accusation that surround contemporary worship. There are certainly people who would claim that the style of contemporary worship is something that God is not pleased with in the church today. However, with the definition put forth in this project it is clear that there is an abundance of support, from a variety of sources, for the practice of contemporary worship in the church today.

This project has demonstrated that there is strong biblical support for contemporary worship. It has been shown that the Old Testament strongly advocates the practice of singing new songs of praise to God. Those new songs are part of the inspired word of God. There is also the command for the people of God to sing a “new song” to the Lord. There are prophetic passages that speak of new songs of praise that will be sung as a result of the mighty

acts of God. King David continues to stand out as a man who experienced God's work in his life in such fresh and powerful ways that at times only a new song could capture the wonderful works that God had brought to pass.

The New Testament also supports the practice of contemporary worship. The early church worship and historian Ralph Martin comments that "The Christian Church was born in song."[28] This project pointed out the new songs recorded in the New Testament as well as the practical admonitions concerning the crucial role of songs of worship in the life of the church. If contemporary worship includes the "ability to approach God sincerely and without religious barriers" then the words of Jesus concerning worshipping God in spirit and truth certainly speak to the heart of contemporary worship.

This project also demonstrated that contemporary worship isn't something new in the church. In Chapter 3 it was shown that contemporary worship has been taking place on an almost continuous basis since the time of the Reformation. Leaders such as Martin Luther and John and Charles Wesley demonstrated that contemporary worship was an inseparable part of a fresh revival among God's people.

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[28] Ralph Martin Worship in the Early Church, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 39.

As revival spread over to a new continent new songs and new methods of worshiping God were present among God's people.

Many of the men and women who are revered in the church today were willing to face criticism for the new methods they employed in the church.

This project also demonstrated that contemporary worship was at the heart of the formative days of the Church of the Nazarene. Strategies that Nazarene pastors and leaders are seeking to utilize today are consistent with the spirit and methods used by the first Nazarenes.

A brief look at some of the cultural changes in America over the past several decades revealed the need for contemporary worship in the church today. This project has shown that America is no longer a nation where most people are active in a church fellowship, but is rapidly becoming more and more of a mission field. People's understanding and attitudes toward the church and leadership in general have changed and so must our methods if we plan to reach them with the gospel message.

This project has also demonstrated that contemporary worship has been an integral part of growing churches. The survey results demonstrated that well over half of the churches that made significant steps toward implementing

contemporary worship also experienced growth during that time. Contemporary worship is almost synonymous with the success stories of churches such as Saddleback and Willow Creek.

Clearly contemporary worship is not a passing fad but a present expression of the ongoing work of God among his people. The biblical, historical and cultural foundations along with the success stories of many churches in America, should be enough to encourage any pastor and congregation to consider implementing contemporary worship today.

B. The Presence of Contemporary Worship In the Church of the Nazarene

It is clear from this project that contemporary worship has had an impact in the Church of the Nazarene. The survey results indicated that less than half of the churches which were traditional in their worship style 10 yeas ago are still traditional today. When all the survey results were considered the data showed that only one third of Nazarene churches are currently classified as traditional in their worship style. While traditional worship is still present in the Church of the Nazarene, it is no longer the dominant style of worship.

The question is no longer, “Will more and more churches change to more contemporary forms of worship?”

Churches are clearly changing to more contemporary forms of worship. This is seen not only in matters of style but also in the increased use of contemporary worship instruments and technology such as electronic keyboards, guitars, drums, video projectors and computer systems. The question is now, “How will we change and is there a workable strategy that can bring meaningful change to pass with a minimal amount of conflict?”

This project demonstrated that contemporary worship can be implemented in a Church of the Nazarene without significant conflict and in a way that brings growth to the church. The journey of Harvest Community Church of the Nazarene illustrates how a Nazarene church can move from a more traditional form of worship to a very contemporary style of worship. Not only did this change happen without conflict, but it also brought a greater sense of unity and purpose to the people of the church. This church is one example that could be followed by others seeking to implement a more contemporary style of worship.

C. The Challenge of Contemporary Worship In the Church of the Nazarene

While this project has demonstrated the support for contemporary worship as well as the presence of contemporary worship it has also made clear some of the

challenges surrounding contemporary worship in the Church of the Nazarene today. Conflict has been a part of the contemporary worship movement as a whole and this project shows that it has also been felt in the Nazarene Church over this issue. It was saddening to read notes attached to some surveys indicating that a church had split or that significant numbers of the congregation had felt alienated due to the changes.

This project clearly points to some of the reasons for that conflict. It has been shown that there is a connection between the pace of change and the level of conflict experienced in the church. A church would be wise to seek to understand just how much change a congregation can process in a given period of time. Moving too quickly with changes can cause damage that may take years to heal.

This project also reveals that there is a connection between the age of the congregation and the level of conflict experienced as a result of worship style changes. The older the congregation the less likely the people are to accept the changes. However, that doesn’t mean that change can’t happen. What it does mean is that an intentional strategy that addresses this issue is needed. A pastor seeking to implement a more contemporary worship style will need to move more slowly with older age groups.

He may also need to spend more time listening and sharing from his heart about the changes he is making without being defensive. The Bible tells church leaders to not be harsh with older men and women but to treat them like one would treat his parents. This project reveals that a pastor seeking to implement contemporary worship will probably have an opportunity to put this biblical counsel into practice with the older members in his congregation.

According to the research in this project it is also clear that church size can be a significant factor in the implementation of contemporary worship. Smaller churches had the most intense conflict and were least likely to change their style of worship. The pastor in a smaller church will need to be very clear about his motives for moving to contemporary worship. He will probably need to move more slowly than someone in a larger church. Larger churches have more resources to draw from and typically have a greater concentration of younger people. Consequently, larger churches will usually be more open to changes in their worship style.

While the challenges that Nazarene churches face are clear, it is also obvious from this project that quite a number of churches were able to implement a more

contemporary style of worship without a great degree of conflict. These successes, along with the above mentioned challenges, point to the need for an effective strategy for the implementation of contemporary worship. Such a strategy will be outlined in the following and final chapter of this project.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMETING CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP IN THE CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE

This project clearly demonstrates that contemporary worship is not a temporary phenomenon on the landscape of church history. Contemporary worship has been around for thousands of years. It is renewed as people discover fresh and up-to-date ways to express their praise and worship to God. This project has also demonstrated that implementing those fresh and up-to-date ways of expressing praise and worship to God is not a simple task. It requires much prayer, thought and diligence if it is to be done effectively. Based on the research of this project the following steps are offered as an effective strategy for the implementation of contemporary worship in a church of the Nazarene.

A. Know Your Church

My project clarifies the proper starting point for implementing contemporary worship. The factors that contribute to conflict stem from the setting and make up of each local church. A pastor who wants to implement contemporary worship needs to seriously consider the location of the church as well as the age of the members in the congregation. The location is important because what is contemporary in one location may be very different from another location. Contemporary worship in suburban Atlanta will not be the same as contemporary worship in rural Georgia. The "current styles, music and language" of these two groups of people may differ significantly and thus the style of worship will as well. The age of the congregations is important because, as the project demonstrates, older people tend to be more resistant to change. It may seem inconsistent but the senior citizen who delights in his new cell phone may not at all have the same delight in the new songs or instruments that are introduced on the platform.

The pastor of the smaller congregation needs to be aware that his task may be even more difficult when it comes to change. Whether it is due to "church ownership" or how long the church has been in existence, smaller

churches are more resistant to changes in worship. The first step for any pastor seeking to make significant changes in worship is to first of all know well the church he pastors.

B. Choose Substance Over Style

This project has demonstrated that growth can be a part of the move to contemporary worship. However, the leader who seeks to initiate worship changes must have greater goals than just a larger crowd on Sunday mornings. Such thinking will leave the present church members feeling unimportant and left out. This will create conflict and division in the church and isn’t necessary if wisdom is used in the process of transitioning to contemporary worship.

The leader must also be careful not to simply implement his own personal preferences for worship. This project has led me to much informal research about contemporary worship in the church of the Nazarene. One conversation stands out as especially sad and it concerns a church that has experienced significant turmoil over changes in the worship style. When the pastor of the church was asked about the volume of the music by a long time leader in the church the

pastor’s response was, “It is that loud because I like it that loud.”

The worship leader must aim for substance when it comes to making changes. He should be a student of worship both old and new. This project contains an abundance of resources on contemporary worship. Familiarity with these will give the worship leader a rich understanding of worship and a more firm foundation to stand upon when difficulty arises. At this point the Lead, or Senior, Pastor must acknowledge his role in the worship ministry of the church. While there may be a paid or volunteer Worship Leader serving in a designated role in the church, it is the Lead Pastor’s responsibility to maintain the biblical integrity of the church’s ministry of worship.

If substance is sacrificed for the sake of style, even if it is supposedly for the sake of reaching unchurched people, the door in worship may be opened for all kinds of foolishness and even ungodly behavior. The nation of Israel blindly imitated the worship of the nations around them and fell into great sin. While great sin may not be the immediate result of an over emphasis on style, foolish and poorly led changes can do more harm than good when it comes to moving a congregation toward more contemporary

worship. Jack Hayford makes this clear in the following quote:

> It only takes one or two people in a group who flail their arms mindlessly during every song or who become clap-happy at the drop of a phrase from the pulpit. A single stupid display can reduce an entire congregation to absolute unwillingness to attempt what otherwise are very biblical expressions of worship.[29]

C. Lay a Biblical Foundation for Contemporary Worship

There is no need for a worship leader to rest only on his own tastes or preferences when the Biblical support for more contemporary worship is so clear. The worship leader should become a student of worship in the Bible. Many of the passages mentioned in this project would be great sermon starters for pastors. Laying a biblical foundation enables the pastor and worship leader to appeal to a higher authority for the changes they are seeking to implement. The Bible must not be used as an instrument with which to beat back the dissenters. But it must be used as the final authority for the practice of the church. As such, it is clearly a strong source of support for contemporary worship. When people voice their frustrations about the new songs the pastor can point to the new songs in scripture and explain why they are so important in the life of faith. When criticism is heard about too much singing

[29] Hayford., 152.

the pastor can call on the authority of scripture to point out that singing the word of God is one of the ways we grow strong in the faith. The closer the pastor clings to the Bible and its authority the less vulnerable he is to divisive accusations that he is just imposing his personal preferences on others.

D. Let History Help You

Contemporary worship is a new thing for many people and as is the case with many new things it may be very uncomfortable and perhaps even a bit frightening for some people. The research for this project clearly shows that contemporary worship is not a new thing. It has been around for hundreds of years in the practice of the Christian church.

Instead of standing out like a lone renegade, the wise and effective pastor will link arms with men like Luther and the Wesleys as he seeks to implement contemporary worship. He will choose songs of substance that are filled with biblical truths and remind the people that historically church leaders have recognized the power of songs to communicate biblical truths. Congregations who hear their stories and the new and contemporary methods

they used to reach people for Christ may be much more encouraged about trying new things today.

This is particularly true for Nazarene Churches for they find their place theologically in the Wesleyan tradition. The history of the Church of the Nazarene is also a strong help to the leader seeking to be more contemporary in worship. Leaders should point to the great and cherished hymns of today and point out the fact that 75 years ago they were brand new and probably hard to get used to. They should point to the spirit of revival in which the Nazarene Church began which was the fertile soil from which these new songs came.

One practical way in which history could help the leader of contemporary worship would be to tell the story behind the song "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" by Martin Luther and the song "The Heart of Worship" by Matt Redman. While the exact date of composition is unknown it is most likely the case that Martin Luther composed his great hymn during a time when he faced extreme opposition for his ideas.[30] This could be pointed out to a congregation to show how God gives new songs to people out of their life situations that

[30] Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of Christianity Volume II, (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1975), 722.

he uses for the building up of the church. The transition could be made by telling how Matt Redman composed his song following a time in which the pastor of his church had
called the church to worship the Lord for a period of months without any musical instruments or accompaniment music. Through that church's journey Matt Redman was called back to the heart of worship.[31]

E. Move Slowly But Intentionally

The danger of getting too far out in front of the people is a very real one for everyone attempting to implement contemporary worship. The research of this project clearly show that there is a connection between the level of conflict and the amount of change a congregation experiences in its style of worship. Too much change too quickly is something the pastor or worship leader must be on guard against.

Immediate and drastic changes are certainly invitations for conflict in most churches. However, there are practical ideas that can enable a church to make meaningful changes in its worship style and in a way most people can understand and accept. A first step would be to

start with the style of worship a church currently uses and make slight adjustments. Hymns might be sung to a different pace. Contemporary arrangements are available for many traditional hymns. A second step would be to clearly introduce and explain changes in the worship style of the church. This could be explained as a way of helping church members understand how new people feel when they enter a church service for the first time and at the same time teach a new song or chorus to the congregation. A third step would be to introduce significant changes as experiments. This keeps people from thinking the pastor or worship leader is going to "make these changes or else." It also acknowledges that these changes are different and may not be easy everyone to understand and embrace. A fourth step would be in the form of a precaution. The leader should never devalue the past in an attempt to move toward the future. Doing so may create conflict that could be avoided with the use of more wisdom and tact.

F. Anticipate Conflict

This project clearly indicates that most churches will experience some amount of conflict as a result of implementing contemporary worship. Over half of the

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[31] Rick Warren The Purpose Driven Life, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan , 2002), 106.

responding churches indicated that they experienced at least a noticeable amount of conflict. The pastor and worship leader are naïve if they imagine that the contemporary worship practices that they long to implement for the glory of God will be warmly received by everyone.

Most people have strong emotional ties to the music of their faith. Anticipating conflict can help the worship leaders to be prepared to listen when it arrives. While the formal survey did not address this issue, informal conversations about this issue as I prepared this project indicated that most people who objected to the changes being implemented just wanted to be heard by their leaders. They didn’t seem to want their way all of the time, but they just wanted to be taken seriously by their leaders and not simply disregarded as people who were out of touch with the times. Too often, when the conflict was not handled properly, that was how many of them felt. Effective conflict management in this area will include listening from the heart, validating the person’s perspective while at the same time inviting them to see another perspective and join the journey the church is taking.

G. Recruit Contemporary Worship Partners

One of the keys to a successful transition at Harvest Community Church of the Nazarene was the close partnership I had with not only the worship leader, but also a few other key leaders who shared the vision for contemporary worship. They were able to share the vision and reinforce it with others in the congregation. These partners should be exposed to new worship ideas through every possible avenue and challenged to set an example to other believers by the way they embrace new worship ideas. They should also be encouraged to lead the changes in worship with love.

H. Be a Spiritual Leader

Leadership in the church has received a great amount of attention in recent years. Books on leadership abound and popular pastors and leaders such as John Maxwell and Bill Hybels regularly draws hundreds and even thousands to their leadership conferences. The term “Worship leader” is a relatively new title in many churches today. It has been used throughout this paper to refer to the person whose primary role is giving oversight, direction and leadership in the church to the songs of worship. Certainly other parts of the worship service may be included in his responsibilities as well. It has also been noted that the

Senior Pastor must assume overall responsibility for leadership in the area of worship.

Some may question the use of the term “Worship Leader”. However, it must be noted that many positions in churches today, particularly in large churches, may not have direct biblical support. Even the position of Sunday School Teacher, which is a vital ministry position across America, is not directly referenced in the Bible. However, few would question the powerful impact of Sunday School Teachers and it is doubtful that many people could be found who suggest the position be eliminated simply because it is not specifically mentioned in the Bible. Rather, Sunday School Teachers today are trained according the principles found in scripture that apply to anyone in a teaching and shepherding role in the church.

While the term “Worship Leader” is not found in scripture, that does not suggest that it is irrelevant for the church today. This project has demonstrated that in the Bible and throughout church history there have been people who led others in the worship of God.

What scripture and the history of the church do clearly suggest is that Worship Leaders must be spiritual leaders. This project pointed out the powerful influence of King David as a leader of worship in Israel.

Contemporary Worship Leaders must not miss the fact that David was a man who sought after God with all of his heart. He was a spiritual leader and not just a promoter of new styles. David was also willing to wait on the Lord. On at least two different occasions he could have seized the throne in his own strength, (1 Samuel 24:1-7, 1 Samuel 26:7-9). However, he was willing to wait on God's timing for his life and his ministry.

The example of David should cause us to be careful in several areas as it concerns worship leadership today. First, we must seek to have worship leaders in our churches who truly have a heart for God. Second, worship leaders must have more to offer than simply a new style and a new instrument. There are undoubtedly many musically talented people who could be brought into the church to lead in worship. However, talent alone will not be sufficient for an effective transition to contemporary worship. Worship Leaders must exercise spiritual discernment and that will not happen without a heart that is fully yielded to God. Third, Worship Leaders must demonstrate wisdom. This will not happen without experience and this points again to the need for the Senior Pastor to be involved in leading the worship of his church. Fourth, Worship Leaders must be people of Godly character. They must be examples for the

church not only in their style of worship, but also in the pattern of their lives. The qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-10 and Titus 1:5-9 certainly apply to Worship Leaders today.

I. Get Ready To Grow

Implementing contemporary worship promises to be a challenging adventure for both leader and congregation. What at first may seem like a great idea in actuality may turn out to be more work for those involved in leading worship. Asking the pianist and organist to play hymns that they have already played together dozens of times is much easier than coordinating a band, teaching them to play together when many of them have only played alone, recruiting and training a worship team, learning new computer software, putting together a computer presentation for every worship service, and handling new technical difficulties. Added to this is the challenge of doing it all with the spirit of Christ and hoping the congregation will join you in the journey. What a growth opportunity! However, this project indicates that embracing this journey can open new doors for numerical and spiritual growth in a church. By following the recommendations in this project the pastor or worship leader can implement a strategy that

is biblically based and balanced enough to provide a steady path for meaningful change while at the same time avoiding unnecessary conflict.

APPENDIX A

CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP SURVEY, SURVEY RESULTS AND ACCOMPANYING LETTER

Contemporary Worship Survey

This survey is designed to help gather information about current worship styles and the how changes in worship styles affect Nazarene congregations. Please answer each question as accurately as possible and return the completed survey to: **Paul Mabry, 701 Cole Drive, Lilburn, GA 30047** Results of this survey are available upon request.

Would you like a copy of the results? Yes ☐ No ☐

General Information

1. Area of Service: ☐ Lead (Senior) Pastor ☐ Worship Leader ☐ Lay Person
   ☐ Staff Member (Youth, Children, etc.) ☐ Other _____

2. How long have you been in your current church?
   ☐ Less than 1 year ☐ 1 to 2 years ☐ 3 to 5 years ☐ 5 to 10 years ☐ 10 years or more

3. Age: ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐ Over 60

4. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

5. Congregational Size in weekend worship attendance:
   ☐ Less than 100 ☐ 100-200 ☐ 200-300 ☐ 300-500 ☐ 500-1000 ☐ 1000 plus

6. Average age of congregation:
   ☐ 21-30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐ Over 60.

7. What is your ministry setting:
   ☐ Urban ☐ Suburban ☐ Inner City ☐ Rural ☐ Other

Worship Style

8. How would you classify your current worship style?
   ☐ Progressive Contemporary (Drama, Videos, Praise Band, etc.)
   ☐ Contemporary (Praise Band, mostly newer music)
   ☐ Blended (Equal balance of traditional and newer elements)
   ☐ Traditional (Piano and organ with mostly hymns and older choruses)

9. What was the style of worship in your church 10 years ago?
   ☐ Progressive Contemporary (Drama, Videos, Praise Band, etc.)
   ☐ Contemporary (Praise Band, mostly newer music)
   ☐ Blended (Equal balance of traditional and newer elements)
   ☐ Traditional (Piano and organ with mostly hymns and older choruses)

10. If using a worship band which instruments are currently used?
    ☐ Electronic Keyboard ☐ Electric Guitar ☐ Acoustic Guitar ☐ Drums ☐ Bass Guitar
    ☐ Trumpet, Saxaphone or other brass instruments ☐ Other_____

11. Please check each of the following elements that are used regularly (at least once a month) in your worship service.
    ☐ Communion ☐ Contemporary Chorus Singing ☐ Hymn singing ☐ Drama
    ☐ Personal Testimonies ☐ Choir specials ☐ Video Clips ☐ Scripture Reading ☐ Baptism

12. Does your church have a weekly Sunday night preaching service? Yes ☐ No ☐

13. Which of the following pieces of technology are currently used in your worship service?
☐ Sound System ☐ Wireless Microphones ☐ Overhead Projector ☐ Video Projector
☐ Computer System ☐ VCR ☐ DVD Player ☐ Large Screen TVs ☐ Other : _____

14. Does your church use a praise team (vocalists who sing with worship leader) on a weekly basis?
Yes ☐ No ☐

15. Do you have a paid worship leader? Yes ☐ No ☐

16. Do members of your church regularly suggest new songs to sing in worship? Yes ☐ No ☐

Evaluation of Changes in Worship Style

(Please answer only if significant changes have been implemented in the last 10 years.)

17. Has the transition to contemporary worship coincided with any growth in your morning worship attendance? Yes ☐ No ☐

18. Which of the following methods were used to facilitate the transition to contemporary worship?
☐ Preaching on worship
☐ Introduction of worship songs as special (i.e. Solos, Choir numbers, etc.)
☐ Using a worship band for special music
☐ Special teaching on contemporary worship
☐ Other _____

19. Who was the key person of influence in any contemporary worship changes your church has made? ☐ Lead (Senior) Pastor ☐ Worship Leader ☐ Lay Person
☐ Staff Member, (Youth, Children, Etc.) Other _____

20. How much conflict was generated as a result of the changes you have made in worship?
☐ None ☐ Relatively little ☐ A noticeable but manageable amount ☐ A significant amount
☐ A great amount

Based on your current understanding please rate the level of acceptance of the following age groups as it concerns the changes you have made to move toward more contemporary worship. While there may be exceptions, please estimate the general response of the group as a whole.

21. Age 12-20 Highly accepting Accepting Tolerant Not Very accepting Very Unaccepting

22. Age 21-30 Highly accepting Accepting Tolerant Not Very accepting Very Unaccepting

23. Age 31-40 Highly accepting Accepting Tolerant Not Very accepting Very Unaccepting

24. Age 41-50 Highly accepting Accepting Tolerant Not Very accepting Very Unaccepting

25. Age 51-60 Highly accepting Accepting Tolerant Not Very accepting Very Unaccepting

26. Age 60 + Highly accepting Accepting Tolerant Not Very accepting Very Unaccepting

27. How would you rate the overall response of the congregation?

Highly accepting Accepting Tolerant Not Very accepting Very Unaccepting

Contemporary Worship Survey Results

General Information

1. Area of Service:

☐ Lead (Senior) Pastor	141
☐ Worship Leader	16
☐ Lay Person	10
☐ Staff Member (Youth, Children, etc.)	3
☐ Other _____	8
BLANK	*2*

2. How long have you been in your current church?

☐ Less than 1 year	18
☐ 1 to 2 years	37
☐ 3 to 5 years	48
☐ 5 to 10 years	37
☐ 10 years or more	39
BLANK	1

3. Age:

☐ 21-30	9
☐ 31-40	23
☐ 41-50	55
☐ 51-60	52
☐ Over 60	41

4. Gender:

☐ Male	159
☐ Female	21

5. Congregational Size in weekend worship attendance:

☐ Less than 100		105
☐ 100-200		36
☐ 200-300		21
300-500	13	
500-1000	4	
1000 plus	0	
BLANK		*1*

6. Average age of congregation:

☐ 21-30	5
☐ 31-40	60
☐ 41-50	71
☐ 51-60	35
☐ Over 60.	6
BLANK	*3*

7. What is your ministry setting:

☐ Urban	39
☐ Suburban	79
☐ Inner City	11
☐ Rural	39
☐ Other	10
BLANK	*2*

Worship Style

8. How would you classify your current worship style?

☐ Progressive Contemporary (Drama, Videos, Praise Band, etc.)	14
☐ Contemporary (Praise Band, mostly newer music)	21
☐ Blended (Equal balance of traditional and newer elements)	79
Traditional (Piano and organ with mostly hymns and older choruses)	65
BLANK	*1*

9. What was the style of worship in your church 10 years ago?

☐ Progressive Contemporary (Drama, Videos, Praise Band, etc.)	1
☐ Contemporary (Praise Band, mostly newer music)	2
☐ Blended (Equal balance of traditional and newer elements)	20
Traditional (Piano and organ with mostly hymns and older choruses)	146
BLANK	*11*

10. If using a worship band which instruments are currently used?

☐ Electronic Keyboard	81
☐ Electric Guitar	57
☐ Acoustic Guitar	57
☐ Drums	66
☐ Bass Guitar	71
☐ Trumpet, Saxaphone or other brass instruments	49
☐ Other_____	29

11. Please check each of the following elements that are used regularly (at least once a month) in your worship service.

☐ Communion	51
☐ Contemporary Chorus Singing	134
☐ Hymn singing	154
☐ Drama	19
☐ Personal Testimonies	124
☐ Choir specials	95
☐ Video Clips	47
☐ Scripture Reading	156
☐ Baptism	9

13. Which of the following pieces of technology are currently used in your worship service?

☐ Sound System	172
☐ Wireless Microphones	130
☐ Overhead Projector	54
☐ Video Projector	72
☐ Computer System	66
☐ VCR	84
☐ DVD Player	58
☐ Large Screen TVs	18
☐ Other : _____	7

14. Does your church use a praise team (vocalists who sing with worship leader) on a weekly basis?

☐ Yes	83
☐ No	97

15. Do you have a paid worship leader?

☐ Yes	55
☐ No	125

16. Do members of your church regularly suggest new songs to sing in worship?

☐ Yes	54
☐ No	120
BLANK	*6*

Evaluation of Changes in Worship Style

(Please answer only if significant changes have been implemented in the last 10 years.)

17. Has the transition to contemporary worship coincided with any growth in your morning worship attendance?

☐ Yes	60
☐ No	46
BLANK	*74*

18. Which of the following methods were used to facilitate the transition to contemporary worship?

☐ Preaching on worship	58
☐ Introduction of worship songs as special (i.e. Solos, Choir numbers, etc.)	74
☐ Using a worship band for special music	31
☐ Special teaching on contemporary worship	13
☐ Other _____	21

19. Who was the key person of influence in any contemporary worship changes your church has made?

☐ Lead (Senior) Pastor	75
☐ Worship Leader	28
☐ Lay Person	2
☐ Staff Member, (Youth, Children, Etc.)	1
☐ Other _____	1
BLANK	*73*

20. How much conflict was generated as a result of the changes you have made in worship?

□ None	19
□ Relatively little	43
□ A noticeable but manageable amount	32
□ A significant amount	9
□ A great amount	6
BLANK	71

Based on your current understanding please rate the level of acceptance of the following age groups as it concerns the changes you have made to move toward more contemporary worship. While there may be exceptions, please estimate the general response of the group as a whole

21. Age 12-20	Highly accepting	80
	Accepting	25
	Tolerant	2
	Not Very accepting	0
	Very Unaccepting	0
	BLANK	*73*

22. Age 21-30	Highly accepting	77
	Accepting	29
	Tolerant	2
	Not Very accepting	0
	Very Unaccepting	0
	BLANK	*72*

23. Age 31-40	Highly accepting	57
	Accepting	44
	Tolerant	5
	Not Very accepting	1
	Very Unaccepting	1
	BLANK	*72*

24. Age 41-50	Highly accepting	29
	Accepting	66
	Tolerant	11
	Not Very accepting	2
	Very Unaccepting	2
	BLANK	*70*

25. Age 51-60	Highly accepting	13
	Accepting	49
	Tolerant	35
	Not Very accepting	6
	Very Unaccepting	5
	BLANK	*72*

26. Age 60 +	Highly accepting	5
	Accepting	33
	Tolerant	43
	Not Very accepting	15
	Very Unaccepting	11
	BLANK	*73*

27. How would you rate the overall response of the congregation?

Highly accepting	32
Accepting	61
Tolerant	10
Not Very accepting	6
Very Unaccepting	2
BLANK	*69*

June 17, 2003

Dear Pastor or Ministry Leader,

As a part of my Doctor of Ministry project I am doing research about contemporary worship in the Church of the Nazarene. Would you please complete the enclosed survey to help me understand how contemporary worship has impacted the church you serve? I have included a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your convenience in replying to this request.

Thank you for sharing your insights with me. Please return your survey as soon as possible, but no later than July 20, 2003.

His servant and yours,

Paul Mabry

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