Liberty University

**Training the Volunteer Technical Artist for their Role in Worship Ministry**

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By

**Stephanie Wilkinson**

Lynchburg, Virginia

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ABSTRACT

Church technical artists have an integral role in modern worship services due to the use of technology in church production. The purpose of this study was to investigate the importance of different aspects of the role a technical artist has in worship ministry, as well as to explore current training practices and determine effective ways to train the volunteer technical artist holistically beyond their technical role. Church technical directors, technical volunteers, and worship pastors were interviewed and surveyed to collect data used to determine the level of importance of a volunteer's different roles and responsibilities and how they affect worship ministry. Data was collected to determine the effectiveness of current training practices and what technical directors and volunteers thought would be ideal training practices.

Participants responded to prompts gauging the level of importance they would assign to four different areas of a volunteer's role: technical knowledge and expertise, theological foundation, relational skills, and artistry. Participants rated technical, theological, and relational aspects to the be the most important in worship ministry, while artistry was secondary. Throughout the research process and literature review, it became clear that technical training was easily available through online resources and training manuals, while theological and relational training were lacking for church technical artists. The data suggested that theological training was the most important and the most consistently misunderstood among all the topics that were explored. Because the use of technology in worship services is so integral to modern worship practices, it is crucial for churches and technical artists, both paid and volunteer, to know and understand the scriptural and theological underpinnings of the job that they do and how they affect the understanding of the congregation they serve.

DEDICATION

This study is, first and foremost, dedicated to the Lord and His purposes. My humble hope and prayer is that it challenges those in production ministry to examine their practices and motives to see that they are pure before the Lord. I hope it is both encouraging and challenging to those who read it, as it has been to me as I've researched and written it. Soli Deo Gloria.

To all fellow volunteer technical artists who faithfully serve in this area of ministry – you are uniquely called to serve God's Church in technical arts ministry for such a time as this. My prayer is that this research serves as a small part of seeking the deeper calling placed on each of our lives and applying it to church technical arts. May God continue to establish the work of our hands (and eyes and ears) to help His gospel to be heard and seen through the technical arts.

To my sweet husband Matthew, without whom I most certainly would not have enjoyed the process quite as much. This thesis is as much yours as it is mine. Thank you for your sacrifices of love and service to me throughout this process and your example of pursuing Jesus in real and meaningful ways.

And to Sarah, my thesis buddy and role model. Here's to being done!!

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The volunteer technical artist (TA) plays an integral part in Sunday morning worship services in many North American Protestant churches, particularly small to large-sized congregations.[1] Whether the church uses very little technical support or has a full-scale production each week, the volunteer technical team facilitates the worship service through audio/visual support. They "set the stage, both literally and figuratively, for people to hear the most significant message of all time—the Gospel."[2]

The volunteer technical team member's primary role and responsibility are four-fold: technical, theological, relational, and artistic.[3] Practically, their role is to facilitate the worship

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[1] According to a 2020 (pre-pandemic) study done by Faith Communities Today, small churches are those that have 1–50 in regular weekly attendance, and medium-sized churches have 51–250 in regular attendance. Churches with 251 or more in weekly attendance are considered large-sized. A church with more than 2,000 in weekly attendance is considered a mega-church. Interestingly, small and medium congregations account for 90% of American congregations, while those with more than 250 people in weekly attendance only account for 10% of American congregations. The distributions of attendees are exactly the opposite relatively, with approximately 60% of all weekly attendees going to churches of 250 or more people in weekly attendance. (Scott Thumma, "Twenty Years of Congregational Change: The 2020 Faith Communities Today Overview" (Hartford: Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford Seminary, 2021), 5. https://faithcommunitiestoday.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Faith-Communities-Today-2020-Summary-Report.pdf. – this study does include information for non-Christian congregations, which accounted for about 6% of the overall data.)

Large to mega-churches often have staff positions for their production team, although volunteers may still be necessary to fill every position needed for a Sunday morning production. According to Timothy Keller, "In the smaller church volunteers do things that in the larger church are done by full-time staff." In his discussion of large-size church dynamics, he continues, "the larger the church, the more planning and organization must go into events. A high quality of production in general is expected…the larger the church the higher its aesthetic bar must be…" to retain newcomers who may not be familiar with the people in leadership. This higher level of production requires staff that are skilled in their field that can be theologically trained to work for the vision of the particular church. (Dr. Timothy Keller, "Leadership and Church Size Dynamics: How Strategy Changes with Growth." (Redeemer City to City, 2010), 2, 4.)

[2] Kendall Connor, "9 Habits of Thriving Church Tech Volunteers," The Creative Pastor, August 13, 2020, https://www.thecreativepastor.com/nine-habits-of-thriving-church-tech-volunteers.

[3] Findings from across multiple books, articles, and resources for production team members and were evaluated and the researcher concluded that these four roles encompass the bulk of a volunteer technical artist's responsibility in the church. Sources include: *I Love Jesus But I Hate Christmas: Tackling the Challenges of Being a Church Technical Artist* (W. Todd Elliott), *Sound, Lighting & Video: A Resource for the Church* (Brad Herring), *The Worshiping Artist: Equipping You and Your Ministry Team to Lead Others in Worship* (Rory Noland), *Producing Worship: A Theology of Church Technical Arts* (Josiah Way).

service using technology and their *technical* skills. They should willingly and generously give of their time without compromising time spent with the Lord or their family, and they should put effort into developing and improving their technical and artistic skills. They should exercise attention to detail and be diligent in honing even the most basic skills and practices because "Without the fundamentals of production, without nailing the details associated with technical excellence...it won't happen."[4] Foundational to a volunteer's ability to function in their role is a level of fluency in their craft and a willingness to continue learning.

Their *theological* role is to communicate the gospel through the means of technology, as well as to practice personal integrity in their ministry and actions. They must first have a personal understanding of and interaction with the gospel and a level of application within their craft that allows them to minister to others through it. Josiah Way, professor and former church technical director, asserts, "How technical artists execute their role speaks to what they truly believe about Christ. To perform their craft without recognizing who God is, what he has done in reconciliation, and how he calls believers to live would be to perform it with no higher value than held by the secular world."[5] They must cultivate a personal walk with the Lord to learn and acknowledge truths about God and reflect those in their service and product. A TA's spiritual ministry has implications beyond the execution of a flawless Sunday morning. Volunteer TAs must remember that "Technical ministry exists to serve the greater ministry vision of the house

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[4] W. Todd Elliott, *I Love Jesus but I Hate Christmas: Tackling the Challenges of Being a Church Technical Artist* (Monee, IL: W. Todd Elliott, 2020), 178.

[5] Josiah Way, *Producing Worship: How Might a Biblically Informed Theological Understanding Help Better Shape Praxis for Contemporary Church Technical Artists?* (Lake Forest, CA: Josiah Way, 2018), 24.

[of worship]."[6] This means that their role is also evangelistic. They are a vital part of communicating the gospel message to every congregant in attendance. Another aspect of their evangelistic role is teaching others on the technical team. Once artists understand that their gifts are God-given and to be used for His glory, they can impart technical and spiritual knowledge to others more effectively without feeling the need to hold their knowledge too closely.

The volunteer's *relational* role in the church is mainly that of clear communication and teachability. Communication is arguably the reason the TA is needed in the church. According to the Certified Technology Specialist exam guide, "In its simplest form, [audio/video (AV)] is about helping people communicate an idea effectively…AV tools and technology are used to help people relate to one another."[7] In the church, the purpose of technology is to "engage them in holy conversation."[8] They should also focus on building good communication and rapport with the pastoral staff and their fellow technical team members. Good communication lays the foundation for unified efforts and mutual respect between parties who may have different methods but the same vision.

The volunteer's *artistic* role is to use their art for Christ, but they must have a deeper understanding of what this means. Their work is an offering of worship to the Lord, who has endowed them with artistic abilities and empowered them to use these abilities for His glory.

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[6] Justin Firesheets, "The Most Effective Church Tech Leaders are Good Listeners," *Church Production Magazine,* August 28, 2019, https://www.churchproduction.com/education/leaders-are-listeners/.

[7] Brad Grimes and InfoComm International, *CTS Certified Technology Specialist Exam Guide, 2nd Edition*, O'Reilly Online Learning (McGraw-Hill, 2013), https://learning.oreilly.com/library/view/cts-certified-technology/9780071807968/part2.html#clnk14.

[8] Michael Bausch, "Worship and Technology Across the Generations," *Liturgy,* 24:3, no pagination. https://doi.org/10.1080/04580630902720469. 2009.

Their art must "be a living example of gospel truth"[9] and allow the Spirit of God to guide their artistic and technical decisions. More than simply preventing distractions, the artist needs to be able to "share God's light, and free man[kind] from the cultural barriers that promote false worship."[10] They must be aware of how their field has been influenced by culture and the implications that might have for the church, as with any art form that must be redeemed for the gospel. The use of technology and audio/visual arts in the church must serve to help focus the worshipers' minds and hearts on the God they are worshiping. Anything that focuses worshipers' attention elsewhere should be reevaluated.

Additionally, the artist should understand that it is not *their* art! God has given them the talent and ability; they are responsible for stewarding and growing their gifts. This understanding can help them hold artistic preferences more loosely when working with church leaders who may have a different vision for a particular moment than the TA. This is key when the question arises, "What happens when the best choice for production isn't necessarily what's best for the service or best for the church?"[11] Although there should always be room for respectful dialog from both the pastoral and production perspectives, when disagreements occur, TAs should yield to the gospel message, the best way to communicate it, and their ministry supervisor.

The church's responsibility to train the volunteer TA for their role in worship ministry is fulfilled through discipleship, technical training, and a balance of accountability and trust. Discipleship is primary because that is the role of Christians to other Christians. Paul's statement in Colossians 1:28 should guide all areas of ministry: "He is the one we proclaim, admonishing

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[9] Way, *Producing Worship*, 64.

[10] Way, *Producing Worship*, 65. Punctuation edited for clarity.

[11] W. Todd Elliott, *I Love Jesus*, 103.

and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ"

(Colossians 1:28 NIV). Therefore, the core group of volunteers who serve on the technical team

should be "fully mature in Christ," prepared to minister through the public address (PA) system

to the congregation and through their craft to other artists. In his doctoral dissertation about

discipling artists in the church, William Barnett writes, "Rather than allowing the arts to be taken

over by the forces of darkness, the church should disciple, and unleash artists to transform

culture with their God-given talents. Artists need to be affirmed and celebrated as partners in the

mission of the church."[12] This is best done through discipleship. The volunteers on the technical

team should live lives that encourage fellow believers in their faith, setting an example of giving

their time and talents back to God, and should also be ready for the opportunity to share their

love for Christ with those who do not yet believe. It is the church's job to equip them for this

role.

  The church is also responsible for providing the volunteer TA with opportunities for

specialized training. This adds value to the technical volunteer as a resource to the church and as

a person. The church must not "demand perfection without the allotted resources and training to

reach the expected goal."[13] Within this technical training, there should be an expectation of

excellence, grace for times when the target is missed, and clear communication of vision so that

everyone can work toward a common goal. The TA must "understand how [their task] aligns

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[12] William S. Barnett, "Developing a Discipleship Program for Artists in Naples, Florida," (D.Min. diss., Liberty University, 2021), 9.

[13] Josiah Way, "Wisdom: Applied Skill That Produces Excellence, A Biblical Examination of Contemporary Church Technical Arts" (Research Gate, University of Birmingham UK), accessed February 9, 2022, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/JosiahWay/publication/289380265_Wisdom_Applied_Skill_That_Produces_Excellence_A_Biblical_Examination_of_Church_Technical_Arts/links/568c5b6a08aeb488ea2fd5e2/Wisdom-Applied-Skill-That-Produces-Excellence-A-Biblical-Examination-of-Church-Technical-Arts.pdf, 2.

theologically with the mission of the church," which should always be "a clear presentation that promotes worship of God."[14]

Finally, the church should provide the technical volunteer with a balance of accountability and trust. Once the training has been provided, the production leader needs to communicate the production standard they expect. Todd Elliott, church technical director and author, states, "It is important to have worked out the values for your team to hold people to the standard. If there is no standard, it is difficult to hold people to it."[15] Once the training has been provided, it is reasonable to allow the volunteer some room for mistakes if those mistakes lead to progress. This requires a level of trust with oversight (accountability) on behalf of the worship pastor or technical lead. After training has been completed, technical volunteers are responsible for implementing and applying what they have learned or asking questions if they do not yet fully understand. This requires a level of accountability for the volunteer.

While many other areas could be addressed, this thesis aims to provide a holistic view of the volunteer TA's role in worship ministry and how the church can equip them for that role. The church can do much to help set up their TAs for success in their many roles, from training to communicating vision and production values. However, they must first understand that the production team is capable of and called to more than simply facilitating the technical aspects of the service. Though broad in scope, every aspect of the role of the volunteer TA needs to be addressed if a healthy, gospel-reflecting result is the goal. The relationship between the TA and the church should be one of mutual progress toward looking more like Christ in all areas of life and ministry.

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[14] Way, "Wisdom," 7, 25.

[15] Elliott, *I Love Jesus*, 180.

**Biblical Context for Technical Artists**

There is biblical precedent for considering the TAs within the church as worship leaders.

In the book of Numbers, God gives the responsibility of transporting the tabernacle to the sons of

Merari.[16] Numbers 4:29–33 states:

> As for the sons of Merari, you shall number them by their families and by their fathers'
> house…everyone who enters the service to do the work of the tabernacle of meeting. And
> this is what they must carry as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting: the boards
> of the tabernacle, its bars, its pillars, its sockets, and the pillars around the court with their
> sockets, pegs, and cords, with all their furnishings and all their service; and you shall
> assign to each man by name the items he must carry. This is the service of the families of
> the sons of Merari, as all their service for the tabernacle of meeting, under the authority
> of Ithamar the son of Aaron the priest.

The tribe of Levi was the tribe of worship leaders, and the sons of Merari were part of the

tribe of Levi. Each family within the tribe of Levi had a different role in leading the congregation

of Israel in worship, from the most menial of tasks to the most important. Other Levites were

tasked with guarding the tabernacle, gathering the people, leading prayers, and offering

sacrifices. The only service assigned to the Merarites was to set up, tear down, and transport the

tabernacle. Without them, the tabernacle could not have been constructed at each new camp or

deconstructed for Israel to move forward.

On the surface, setting up the tabernacle may seem mundane, but their role was vital to

the worship practices of the nation of Israel. Similarly, the volunteers and staff of church

production teams often arrive first and leave last, ensuring that each production element of the

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[16] The basis for the discussion surrounding the sons of Merari must be credited to the opening session at the Innovative Faith Resources 2022 *Worship and Technology Conference* hosted at Liberty University in Lynchburg, VA. Dr. Stephen Müller, Dean of the Liberty University School of Music, opened the conference with a talk on the different roles of each family of Levites. The connection between the Merarites and church staff and volunteers who do the behind-the-scenes tasks was obvious. It is also noteworthy that the Merarites, despite their lack of visibility in the worship practices of the tabernacle, were Levites and were therefore considered worship leaders of the Israelites. Those who serve as technical artists, while not obviously visible to the worshiping congregation are still worship leaders with impact.

service is prepared. While not on the stage, they set the stage for those with a more visible role in the worship service. Without a proper understanding of how to worship through serving, they may be unmotivated to perform the mundane tasks required from week to week. Like the Merarites' task, the goal of the technical team should be to remove obstacles from the congregation's ability to engage in corporate worship. This requires diligence in the details. Executing the basics well is the key to excellent production quality.[17] Basics are the foundation of producing a worship service that goes beyond preventing distraction to aiding the congregation in offering their sacrifice of praise.

Additionally, two sides of production play into worship: the technical and the artistic.[18] The technical side addresses the details, logistics, and technological knowledge needed to skillfully operate the equipment. The artistic side deals with the TA as a worshiper, the gifts God has given them, and the fact that they offer personal worship by using their talents for God's service and leading the congregation in corporate worship. There is perhaps more weight to this task than most realize or think of in the week-to-week routine of Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights. The reality is that "If you're using your artistic gifts to facilitate worship in any way, you are indeed leading worship…the congregation follows your lead."[19] This places great responsibility on the TA to ensure that they lead from a place of humility and understanding of God's Word and His character and a heart of worship.

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[17] Elliott, *I Love Jesus*, 47.

[18] Elliott, *I Love Jesus*, 23.

[19] Rory Noland, *The Worshiping Artist: Equipping You and Your Ministry Team to Lead Others in Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 10.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The scope of this research considers the volunteer TA holistically as a person, addressing not just their technical role in the church but also their roles as worshipers, communicators, and worship leaders. While existing literature has covered the topics of training a volunteer TA in all areas, including technical and relational skills, theology and biblical foundations, and artistry, much more remains to be discussed. This study aims to identify the needs of the volunteer TA beyond technical training and offer a practical application for how churches can improve training in each area.

**Foundational Literature for This Study**

If the TA is to be considered a worship leader, similar to the sons of Merari as members of the tribe of Levi, then they must be trained as such. A worship leader must be a theologian, a disciple of Jesus, an artist, and a leader.[1] Following the example of Jesus, the Great High Priest, worship leaders lead the people of God in worship and, in a way, "mediate the worship experience between the stage and congregation, and thus between God and the church."[2, 3]

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[1] Kevin Navarro, *The Complete Worship Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 5–6.

[2] Josiah Way, "Producing Worship,"121.

[3] In an interview with Dr. Way, the researcher had the opportunity to clarify this statement. Biblically, Jesus is the only Mediator between God and the church, making Way's statement here theologically questionable. Way addressed this concern as follows:

> "Because you see the sound passing through from voice to microphone, to the soundboard, to the set of speakers to the congregation, that all makes sense. But yet, why does a worship pastor put ears in to hear, and have a microphone to hear the congregation back? Why do we sing back to the stage? Why do you have a worship pastor walk off stage and go, "wow, people were really engaged today, we could feel the Spirit moving." If it were only one-directional, there wouldn't be a response. So, the fact that there is a presentation and response means there's something there and this could be a place for other people to continue to maybe take my research and build upon it. But the fact that there is action and response makes sense that it has to be bidirectional and therefore there is that sense that the [congregational response] has a direct effect on how the people on the platform lead." (Josiah Way, interview by author, Microsoft Teams meeting, Lynchburg, VA, August 25, 2022.)

Dr. Josiah Way's dissertation, "Producing Worship," calls for theological literacy among TAs and exegetes three biblical passages for direct application to church technical arts. Way appeals to the following passages as he lays out a biblical theology of the technical arts: the example of Bezalel and Oholiab in Exodus 35:30–36:1, the example of Jesus as the Mediator of worship in Hebrews 2:12–13, and Colossians 3:16 in which Paul discusses different mediums of worship.

In Exodus, Bezalel, an artist called by God to build the tabernacle according to His instructions, was filled with the Spirit of God specifically so that he could fulfill the command. Beyond his personal skills as an artist, Bezalel was a spiritual and artistic teacher to those who assisted him with the task of building. Way argues that modern-day TAs are similarly called to skillfully build the "space" and atmosphere of worship in modern congregations and to teach others.

In his discussion of the passage in Hebrews, Way likens the role of the TA as a mediator of worship to Jesus' role as the mediating High Priest who sings praises to God with His children.[4] "Jesus' role serves as a contemporary metaphor for church technical arts. Just as the Son intercedes between the Father and believers, so too TAs are physical mediators between the stage and congregation."[5] This establishes the technical arts as a form of worship leading and necessitates that a theology of technical arts be developed. As a part of worship, the technical

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The researcher interpreted this statement to mean that there are two aspects of congregational "mediation" that the technical artists help facilitate: between the stage and the congregation, and—by the Spirit's leadership—between God and the church. The worship and production teams are merely vessels of the Spirit's movement within the congregation if He chooses to use them as such.

[4] Way, "Producing Worship," 11.

[5] Way, "Producing Worship," 4.

arts "must be performed in a way that conforms to…the entire biblical narrative."[6] Therefore the church must apply a biblical foundation to the technical arts, not the other way around.

Lastly, Way appeals to Colossians 3:16 as he argues for the biblical context for the technical arts as a form of multimedia worship. Although examples of different expressions of worship can be found through all of Scripture—singing, dancing, shouting, bowing, clapping, and more—Way uses Colossians 3:16 to emphasize that the technical arts are a form of worship. The passage says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." According to Way, "New Testament worship involves a mixture of meaning, methodology, and practice. For the modern church TA, the conclusion could be drawn that structured worship practice ought to be a holistic combination of scriptural reliance within a modern cultural context."[7] Within the context of modern culture and the church, production is a means of communicating something, generally in a way that is inspiring to the receiver. Pursuing a high level of production quality solely to compete with the secular world for congregants' attention is futile without the leadership of Christ Himself through the Holy Spirit. Most certainly, church TAs must rely on the guidance of Scripture and the Holy Spirit to correctly wield the tool of production ministry. When church production is used as a tool for "teaching and admonishing one another," TAs engage in the act of worship to God and with the body of Christ.

Overall, Josiah Way's work in creating a biblical theology of church technical arts helps lay a scriptural foundation that previously had not been applied in the existing literature on church technical arts. Throughout his dissertation, Way addresses how to do the ministry of

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[6] Way, "Producing Worship," 10–11.

[7] Way, "Producing Worship," 198.

church production in a way that honors the artistry and technicality that is so highly valued by many in the production industry. He eloquently speaks to many issues that arise in technical arts ministry due to a lack in various areas, including communication, correct focus and vision, or understanding of the significance of the role. He uses Scripture to address those issues in truth. Way's work is significant to this project in particular and to the training of TAs in general because it provides a sounding board for all aspects of the TA's roles as a production team member, theologian, communicator, worshiper, artist, and church member.

Todd Elliott, the founder of FILO (First In Last Out) and the FILO Conference, wrote *I Love Jesus but I Hate Christmas.* This book addresses the challenges that TAs face in ministry. Often, they are the first to arrive and the last to leave. Their position requires that they have the technical knowledge needed to accomplish what each service or production needs and that they can think and communicate well under pressure. Often, extra preparation is required, especially during times like Christmas and Easter, so TAs sacrifice their personal and family time to be at the church for longer hours. Elliott writes about his personal experiences with these and many other challenges and frames them through a biblical lens, emphasizing loving people more than the task. He understands the TA as both a "techie" and an artist and addresses the relational aspect of the role. Elliott emphasizes tenacity in the basics, both technical and theological. Written for the laity, *I Love Jesus* serves as an accessible resource and quick read for those who serve on and lead church production ministry teams. Paired with "Producing Worship," these two resources form the bulk of recently written theological basis for TAs in ministry.

**Related Literature**

Technical Training Resources

Brad Herring, managing editor of *Worship Arts & Technology Magazine* and author of

*Sound, Lighting & Video: A Resource for Worship*, addresses the critical theological

underpinnings of the use of technology in worship throughout the technical guide. Herring writes

that technology is the TA's "opportunity to create something that will speak directly into

someone's life and change it forever!"[8] He continues:

> As a person passionate about media, or entrusted in the role of media support…you are
> an integral part of worship…Without you, the people don't hear.… Media has become
> integral to worship – obviously not the act of worship itself, but definitely the process and
> the effectiveness of unobstructed corporate worship and clear, concise teaching.[9]

Herring encourages TAs to never take their role for granted. Because technology has

become integral to worship in contemporary practice, TAs are needed in the modern church

context.[10] *Sound, Lighting & Video,* while older for a technical guide, is an excellent starting

point for those who want to learn the basics of production within the context of the church.

Herring covers the major components of AV and lighting systems and how to implement,

troubleshoot, and choose equipment for the church.

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[8] Brad Herring, *Sound, Lighting & Video: A Resource for the Church* (Oxford: Elsevier Inc., 2009), introduction, xvi.

[9] Herring, *Sound, Lighting & Video*, xvii.

[10] According to worship historians Lester Ruth and Swee Hong Lim, the use of modern technology in worship has been a guiding factor in most changes to current worship practices since the late 1980s.

Lester Ruth and Swee Hong Lim, *A History of Contemporary Praise and Worship: Understanding the Ideas that Reshaped the Protestant Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021), 251. ProQuest Ebook Central.

James Wasem's *Great Church Sound: A Guide for the Volunteer* is an excellent, more recent update to Herring's guide. Specifically focused on audio, this guide offers quick-reference definitions, troubleshooting steps, and practical suggestions that can help audio engineers at the beginning and intermediate levels improve their mix. Wasem specifies at the outset that it is not a guide written for experts, making it a great starting point for beginners and amateurs.

The Yamaha *Guide to Sound Systems for Worship* is a much older but standard resource. Published in 1990, this guide would have been essential to churches that were increasing the capabilities of their sound systems and converting to a more contemporary band-led style of worship. With the rise of Christian music publishers, worship albums, and Contemporary Christian Music (CCM), churches sought to reach a similar production level in their worship ministries. This led to the need for more sophisticated sound systems, more complex and varied audio signal inputs, and an understanding of how sound interacted with the worship space. The guide published by Yamaha offered instruction on each of those topics, making it one of the leading sources for church TAs of the 1990s. Because the basic principles of sound theory and audio engineering still stand, this guide is still helpful to those who need to design a sound system from scratch or want to improve the sound of their space based on sound theory. Although most audio consoles have switched to digital or a hybrid between analog and digital, the principles and tools remain mostly unchanged, making the book applicable to today's churches.

Many other resources exist for technical training, especially online. YouTube Channels such as Churchfront, Church Audio Life, MxU, and Collaborate Worship have free videos that answer common church production questions, show how to use standard equipment to its highest potential, and offer encouragement to fellow TAs. Videomaker.com is a website that has buyers'

guides, podcasts, reviews on video equipment, and instructional articles and videos. It is not focused on church ministry but is a helpful resource for improving live stream and video ministries. Those resources are all free and accessible to anyone. Other online resources include tech blogs, user manuals of commonly used equipment, and online forums where people can ask questions and share experiences.[11] Additionally, several magazines exist that focus on worship, some specifically on the technical arts, including *Church Production Magazine* and *Technologies for Worship Magazine.* There are also opportunities for in-person training through church tech conferences such as the FILO Conference, Church Facilities Conference and Expo, SALT Conference, and the Church and Technology Summit.

<div align="center">Theological Resources for Church Technical Artists</div>

The purpose of technology in worship is to aid in communication between the leader and congregation. Whether it is presentational technology being used to communicate Scripture or song lyrics, audio amplification to communicate musical worship and the message of the gospel, or lighting to convey an atmosphere of reverence or celebration, technology has irreversibly been integrated into modern worship practices. The paradox is that something so integral to the modern-day American Christian's experience of worship is supposed to be invisible. According to Michael Bausch, a pastor and proponent of multi-media in worship, "It is invisible because it serves the central core of the church and its worship: to capture the gathered community's attention, to engage them in a holy conversation, and then to send them out on missions of love

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[11] Church tech blogs include: *Behind the* Mixer, *Church Tech Today*, and *The Creative Pastor*, Forums include: ProSoundWeb (Church Sound, Lighting, and Pro AV forums), Church IT Network, and Church Soundcheck.

and justice."[12] Technology should never be the point or focus of worship. Below is a brief review of available literature that speaks to the foundation of the use and purpose of technology in worship services.

Writer and former professor of communication Quentin Schultze has written several books on communications technology in the church. His book *High-Tech Worship? Using Presentational Technologies Wisely* talks about how and why presentational technologies should be implemented in worship. Schultze covers several important topics often overlooked by technical guides for churches, such as how presentational technology supports true and sincere worship, the disadvantages (and advantages) of using a screen in worship, and how presentational technologies fit within different liturgical traditions. Schultze frames TAs as stewards of God's creation who, before implementing the newest and best technology, must "Consider first how technological practices will help to form us as caretakers of God's world and agents of shalom."[13] This perspective on technical arts requires examining why elements of the weekly routine of church production are present. Centering church production around the concept of being caretakers of God's creation, His Church, and His message of salvation and love for all people puts the technical arts into proper perspective. Although production quality must be excellent to achieve this goal without distracting the congregation, and technology plays an integral part in modern worship practices, technology is simply a tool God has chosen to use in His church. Life transformation can happen without technology.

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[12] Michael Bausch, "Worship and Technology Across the Generations," *Liturgy* 24:3 (2009): no pagination, https://doi.org/10.1080/04580630902720469.2009.

[13] Quentin J. Schultze, *High-Tech Worship? Using Presentational Technologies Wisely* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004), 47. The literal translation of the Hebrew word *shalom* means "peace." Schultze uses *shalom* to refer to "living obediently within God's commands rather than for our own interests and selfish desires."

An argument against increasing the use of technology in worship is Jay Kim's *Analog Church: Why We Need Real People, Places, and Things in the Digital Age.* Kim does not necessarily argue against using technology in worship, but he points out the dangers of overuse and focusing on technology as *the* tool for ministry. Specifically speaking to social media, virtual communities, and smartphones, Kim refers to Marshall McLuhan's "Four Laws of Media." The fourth law theorizes that all forms of media, however useful, reverse in on themselves when pushed to their limits.[14] For example, the smartphone was designed to increase the human capacity to connect with other humans, but when pushed to its limit, people become more absorbed in their devices than in connecting with the humans right next to them.[15] The risk churches take in trying to integrate more media options for their congregations to connect is the potential of losing the ability to connect authentically with others in the way the Church was meant to do. McLuhan further addresses this issue on a more philosophical level in his article titled, "The Medium is the Message." He goes as far as to say that the medium itself shapes the way humans interact in context—in the church's case, technology in its different forms and formats. He writes, "The medium is the message because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action…it is only too typical that the 'content' of any medium blinds us to the character of the medium."[16] Kim encourages technical leaders in the church to carefully avoid what C.S. Lewis referred to as "chronological

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[14] Marshall McLuhan, "Laws of the Media," *ETC: A Review of General Semantics* 34, no. 2 (1977): 175. http://www.jstor.org/stable/42575246.

[15] Jay Y. Kim, *Analog Church: Why We Need Real People, Places, and Things in the Digital Age* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 39–41. ProQuest Ebook Central.

[16] Marshall McLuhan, "The Medium is the Message," *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (1964): 2. https://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/mcluhan.mediummessage.pdf.

snobbery,"[17] always chasing after the next newest and best thing for their church. All production team members should consider and know the purpose of integrating a new system, introducing a new platform, designing a new light show, or adding a new effect to an audio mix.

*The Wired Church 2.0* (a 2008 update to the 1999 version, *The Wired Church*) is written by Len Wilson and Jason Moore. Wilson and Moore emphasize that the technical arts should be considered a ministry "that uses video, audio, graphics, text, the Internet, and other emerging technology applications to communicate the gospel."[18] The book includes four sections, each addressing developing a mission for media, making media meaningful in worship, training the production team, and finally, mastering the technology. This book begins with the "why" rather than the "how" of church production.

An article that discusses the application of technology in worship in a different way is Katja Rakow's article entitled, "The Light of the World: Mediating Divine Presence through Light and Sound in a Contemporary Megachurch." Where Way argues that TAs are, in a sense, mediators of the worship service in that they facilitate elements to be more accessible to all members of the congregation, Rakow argues that technology, specifically lighting, is a tool for mediating divine presence in the worship service. Rakow, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Utrecht University in the Netherlands, is a researcher who focuses on megachurches in the United States and Singapore, with special interests in technology, material religion, and the

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[17] C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy, The Shape of My Early Life* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1955), chapter 8, no pagination. Project Gutenberg Canada Ebook #1275. In his book *Surprised by Joy*, C.S. Lewis defines "chronological snobbery" as "the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited."

[18] Len Wilson and Jason Moore, *The Wired Church 2.0* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008), https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=857423&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

transcultural dynamics of religious practices.[19] "The Light of the World" details the practices of the TAs who run lighting for Lakewood Church in Houston, TX. Known for its massive size, the former basketball arena-turned-church was designed to have state-of-the-art lighting, audio, video, and production capabilities. When designing the renovated space, the church wanted to create an arena that could house a large congregation but simultaneously create an intimate atmosphere for worshipers to connect with God individually. Rakow states, "In Evangelical discourse and practice, light is associated with the forgiveness of sin, salvation, and eternal life. The use of light in a megachurch service might thus be used not only to illuminate the space but also to convey moods and ideas related to the Evangelical message of salvation."[20] In such a large space, which must simultaneously be a television production studio and a venue for live worship, lighting is essential to creating an atmosphere for both live and television audiences.

Just like audio is a tool for communicating the message of the gospel clearly, lighting can be a tool to help create atmosphere. A brief reference guide for lighting for worship produced by Philips Solid-State Lighting Solutions states that "Regardless of your approach to worship, you need a lighting style that supports your worship style. Effective lighting focuses attention, creates appropriate mood and atmosphere, communicates meaning, and engages the audience."[21] Rakow argues, "The Evangelical dramaturgy supported by elaborate light and sound systems mediates divine presence by stimulating emotions and preparing the individual to anticipate feelings of closeness to God while simultaneously embodying and reinforcing specific theological concepts

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[19] Katja Rakow, "The Light of the World: Mediating Divine Presence through Light and Sound in a Contemporary Megachurch," *Material Religion* 16, no. 1 (2020): no pagination, https://doi.org/10.1080/17432200.2019.1696561.

[20] Rakow, "The Light of the World."

[21] Philips Solid-State Lighting Solutions, Inc, "LED Lighting for Worship," (Burlington: Philips Color Kinetics, 2010), 3. dokument.pub-led-lighting-for-worship-color-kinetics-flipbook-pdf.

and epistemological assumptions within believers."[22] This statement is problematic because, although lighting can be a powerful tool in creating a worshipful atmosphere, it must be used with guidance from the Spirit of God to avoid stepping over the narrow distinction between human manipulation and "creating an affective atmosphere."[23] Rakow's final statement could be met with the question, "If the house lights were all on so that everyone could see each other, would they still be able to feel close to God in worship? Would the divine presence be as effectively 'mediated?'" The answer to that is "yes," because the Holy Spirit indwells each believer, and God has promised to be with His people "to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). TAs must ask these types of questions to ensure that the *why* behind the use of worship technologies and their artistic choices align with Scripture and the Spirit of God. "Atmosphere" must never be confused with God's presence and power.

Harold Best, former dean of the Conservatory of Music at Wheaton College, wrote *Music Through the Eyes of Faith*. Although he is writing specifically about music, his book speaks to the questions raised by Rakow's argument in the context of a worship service. He writes, "There is really no difference between someone carving a God out of what otherwise is a piece of firewood and someone else who happens upon or makes a certain kind of music, expecting it to govern the actions of those hearing and using it…These principles…apply whenever anyone says

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[22] Rakow, "The Light of the World."

[23] While Rakow is heavily involved in research about the American church, specifically mega-churches with Pentecostal influences, the researcher could not ascertain if Rakow is a follower of Christ. For the sake of this project, it will be assumed that she is writing about the Church as a non-Christian. Specifically, her use of the word "mediate" in this context is concerning; Scripture states that no one comes to the Father except through Jesus (John 14:6), and that Christ is the only Mediator of the worship of His Church to the Father (Heb. 5:9–10). Dr. Way's argument that Christ's mediation serves as a metaphor for church technical arts is more accurate (Way, 101). Nevertheless, the point remains that all church technical artists must be aware of their intentions in implementing artistic decisions, knowing that it is only the Spirit of God that effects change in the hearts of His people.

that the presence of God is felt more keenly when music is made than when it is not."[24] Best's

book is a rich study of music in the context of worship and is applicable to church production

since so much of his discussion revolves around music as art and art forms in worship. He

encourages readers that for the believer, being moved by music (or, in this case, the production

elements) is secondary to worshiping God, and that God is the "primary mover."[25]

<div align="center">The Technical Artist as Volunteer and Church Member</div>

*The Volunteer Effect*, written by Jason Young and Jonathan Malm, speaks to the

community aspect of the volunteer team, within or outside of the church. *The Volunteer Effect* is

not explicitly aimed at any one area of ministry, but the truths are applicable in this context as

well. The book is arranged into three main sections, "Find," "Keep," and "Motivate." These

three themes seem central to most discussions regarding technical art ministries. The "Keep"

section begins with a chapter entitled, "Help Volunteers Belong," which speaks to why

volunteers leave due to burnout or frustration. Unfortunately, in many cases, the more

demanding the role, the less people are known because it is easy to become so focused on the

task rather than the people. In reality, "People want to be known personally and tangibly by their

teammates, and they want their leader to invest in them. They want a leader to know details

about their life, celebrate them, and see their value."[26] Adding value to volunteers is the theme of

the remaining four chapters of the "Keep" section of *The Volunteer Effect*. Whether through a

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[24] Harold Best, *Music Through the Eyes of Faith,* 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Harper One: 1993), 49.

[25] Best, 152.

[26] Jason Young and Jonathan Malm, *The Volunteer Effect: How Your Church Can Find, Train, and Keep Volunteers Who Make a Difference* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 49, ProQuest Ebook Central.

combination of building community, establishing clear communication of expectations, or frequent training, volunteers must first be seen and treated as people and secondly as TAs.

One of the main stigmas surrounding church techs is the "troublesome attitude" that many in church leadership seem to experience from people in production ministry.[27] This perspective is usually framed as the pastor's or worship leader's view of the people in the tech booth. Steven Reed is a worship leader and hosts the "Worship Leader Podcast" with his wife in partnership with *Worship Leader Magazine*. Reed's article, "Why the Attitude?" speaks to the stigma of the "sound person attitude" that sound techs are often perceived to have. Often, when a sound or video tech becomes troublesome, it is due to miscommunication, misplaced blame, lack of trust, or all three. Reed writes that the space between the platform and the tech booth "is where the people are caught in the crossfire every Sunday."[28] In other words, if a conflict arises and is allowed to be established as a rule of communication, it is not only the communication and the function of the team that is affected. Eventually, the ability to effectively minister to the congregation—the entire point of technical arts ministry—is reduced. As worship leaders in the church, the tech team and church leaders should be the first and most eager to address conflict to move forward, unified in love and truth, to accomplish what God has called them to do.

The Artistic Side of Church Technical Arts

Rory Noland is the founder of Heart of the Artist Ministries and is a speaker, mentor, and worship leader. His book, *The Heart of the Artist: A Character-Building Guide for You and Your Ministry Team,* speaks to the artistic side of those who serve on the worship, tech, and creative

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[27] Steven Reed, "Why the Attitude?" *Worship Leader Magazine*, July 2014, https://worshipleader.com/leadership/why-the-attitude.

[28] Reed, "Why the Attitude?"

teams in churches. Noland talks about how to steward artistic ability and foster character and authentic worship as an artist. Due to the nature of how they serve in the church and how it affects those who see, hear, and experience their art, artists in the church need to pursue a relationship with Christ and a life of integrity just as much as those who are in ministry leadership:

> We expect pastors to be godly people. We expect them to walk intimately with Christ and have godly character…Why don't we expect the same from our musicians and all our other artists? We're not just artists. We are ministers too. We stand on the same platform and address the congregation with the same message. Shouldn't we aspire to high standards of integrity just like the pastor?[29]

Noland speaks to key issues that can plague artists, both in and out of the church, such as excellence versus perfectionism, jealousy and envy, lack of community, managing emotions—something for which artists seem to be known not to do well—and sin. In each of these areas, artists in the church need to be discipled to follow biblical standards of ministering with the heart of a servant, celebrating the gifts of others, community, and accountability. Noland also provides practical steps to address sins that most commonly arise for artists in the church, outlining how to combat them with truth, Scripture, and accountability, with the foundation of obedience to Christ.

Also written by Noland, *The Worshiping Artist* is a resource specifically written to train artists to become worship leaders rather than simply artists who worship. Noland outlines how artists can grow in their worship, beginning with personal growth in their relationship with God through experiencing and responding to God's character and allowing Him to transform them. Artists, like the rest of the body of Christ, are to worship in Spirit and truth, meaning their

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[29] Rory Noland, *The Heart of the Artist: A Character-Building Guide for You and Your Ministry Team, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2021), 31–32. ProQuest Ebook Central.

worship must be biblically based, glorifying to God, and edifying to themselves and others.

Noland emphasizes in this book the need for unity between artists and those around them. Often,

artistic preference or differences in opinions can so easily cause division between artists and their

leadership and fellow artists. Unity cannot be based on having the same views regarding artistic

preferences or even the fact that the team has a unified goal. Instead, unity must be first and

foremost "based on the fact that you are all brothers and sisters in Christ. You share a common

purpose, to lead others in worship, but Jesus Christ is your reason for being—he's your bond of

unity."[30]

Worship is paramount for artists who wish to serve the Lord with their talents within the

context of the church. Art can express worship, but more importantly, worship transforms the

artist. Noland writes:

> Second Corinthians 3:18 teaches that when we behold or contemplate God's glory, we
> are "transformed into his likeness." Thus, we are molded and shaped by the character of
> God. Every encounter with God comes with an invitation to be renewed into his image
> (Colossians 3:10). For that reason, worship can play a very significant role in our spiritual
> formation.[31]

Everyone worships something or someone because "Whatever occupies the majority of

our thoughts and controls our behavior is our god."[32] This is a common struggle for artists, who

often use their creative expression to express their inner emotions, process the world around

them, and communicate with others. In training artists to be worship leaders, "Pastors must also

teach and remind them of their calling as artists and that their identities and creative abilities are

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[30] Noland, *The Worshiping Artist,* 147.

[31] Noland, *The Worshiping Artist,* 74.

[32] Noland, *The Worshiping Artist,* 74.

conduits to reflect God's image."[33] The solution is to behold God and His glory and worship Him. God uses worship to transform His people as they behold Him and submit to His work and conviction in their lives. Worship is the starting point of finding purpose in life, something that many artists depend on their art to give them. According to Noland, worship answers three essential questions: 1) Who is God? 2) Who am I? and 3) What is God inviting me to do?[34] The answers to these three questions offer great purpose and direction. Artists who know who God is, who they are in Him, and what God has invited (or called) them to do will know what and Who their art is for.

### Conclusion

The above represents a summary of the most relevant related books, articles, and resources on the topic of training TAs for their role in worship ministry. While other resources, such as online articles and blogs, exist, these represent the majority of long-form research and writing on the topic of the church TA. Together, they form the basis for this research. Most are written from the perspective of church technical directors or worship leaders, while very little content is written by current, active volunteers. The research detailed in the following chapters includes input from both leaders and volunteers in church production ministries.

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[33] William S. Barnett, "Developing a Discipleship Program for Artists in Naples, Florida," (D.Min diss., Liberty University, 2021), 88.

[34] Noland, *The Worshiping Artist,* 77.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

The research model used for this study was a convergent parallel mixed methods approach. This model consists of gathering quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously, analyzing the data separately but interpreting them together.[1] For this study, a mixed methods approach was necessary to answer the research questions as each required a different type of data. Research Question 1 required qualitative data, while Research Question 2 required quantitative data. According to Creswell, this design method assumes, "Both qualitative and quantitative data provide different types of information—often detailed views of participants qualitatively and scores on instruments quantitatively—and together they yield results that should be the same."[2]

Two different means of data collection were used throughout the process. At first, all information was gathered from participants through interviews. Later in the research process, a survey was added to increase accessibility for study participants. The interviews and survey gathered qualitative data using Likert scale questions. Both types of data were collected in interview format to get immediate feedback on why participants chose their answers for the Likert scale questions. This approach helped gather a greater breadth of information from each participant since participation was limited. The surveys added ease for the participants and

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[1] "Basic Mixed Methods Research Designs," Harvard Catalyst, 2022, https://catalyst.harvard.edu/community-engagement/mmr/hcat_mmr_sm-6090567e0f943-60905896c80af-60e5fdbc2399e-60e5fdd8057fc-610bf777da6a0-610bf7808de24-610bf792228a4-610bf8685d8f5-610bf871cbea9/.

[2] John. W. Creswell and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed, (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2018), 217.

helped collect more hard data but made it more challenging to get broader information from church volunteers.

## Protocols

Due to the nature of the technical arts ministry, this study was delimited to persons serving as volunteers, staff, technical or arts directors, and worship pastors/leaders who regularly interact with that ministry. Participants were required to meet the following criteria: 1) at least five years of experience in technical arts ministry, 2) demonstrable skill in operating sound, lighting, video, or creating digital media in the church setting, and 3) a follower of Christ and currently involved in a local church. This study provides a current perspective on the subject by interviewing those actively participating in technical arts ministry.

This study focuses on the production element of worship services within churches of varying sizes. However, it is more challenging to connect with small- to mid-size churches because their production teams are generally run by volunteers whose contact information is not publicized in most cases. Most participants who responded serve or work at mid- to large-size churches.

Information was initially gathered from participants via interviews, lasting about 2 hours over two sessions with each participant. Interviews were conducted over video calls using Microsoft Teams. The interviews were recorded and transcribed automatically by Teams and the transcripts were then edited by the researcher for accuracy after the interview. Confidentiality of names and places of employment was maintained unless the individual participants agreed on the signed consent form to have their real names and locations of employment published. Research approval was granted through the Liberty University IRB, and all protocols regarding confidentiality, research methods, and communication were followed. All but one of the

interview participants chose to have their names published with their interview results. The interview of the technical director who chose confidentiality was not recorded or transcribed. The researcher took notes during the discussion rather than recording an exact transcription. Once IRB approval was received, recruitment emails were sent to potential participants. Upon scheduling each interview, the researcher sent the consent form by email to each participant at least one week before their interview. Participants were asked to review the consent form thoroughly and to contact the researcher with any questions or concerns before signing the consent form. Participants were notified at the start of their interview when the recording was in progress.

While finding contacts who work as technical directors and worship pastors was relatively simple, enrolling participants who volunteer for the church they attend was more challenging. Further in the process, it was determined that reaching out to volunteers would be easier if the participation requirements did not include a signed consent form and interview. Thus, an anonymous survey was designed with questions to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data through the use of the Likert scale and open-ended questions. The consent document at the top of the survey gave complete anonymity by allowing respondents to agree to participate in the study by selecting "yes" or "no." If they selected "no," the survey ended; if they selected "yes," the survey continued. The survey took about twenty minutes to complete, depending on how in-depth the participant chose to be in their responses to the open-ended questions. By distributing a survey instead of reaching out for interviews, data collection was faster and resulted in a smoother experience for the participants.

The interviews were based on a pre-planned list of questions, many of which had sub-questions and follow-up questions. The interviews were conversational enough to allow for

discussion and further exploration of each participant's answers. While interviews were limited to one hour in length, all participants were willing to schedule a follow-up interview. Each lasted another hour, with the exception of one participant who stayed on the initial interview call for an additional 30 minutes.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

In researching how to best train the volunteer worship technical artist for their role in worship ministry, the perspective of those actively involved in church production ministry at any level is crucial. The perspective of volunteers and their directors helped narrow the scope of these questions and brought to the surface the topics that have more impact on the volunteer or production ministry.

Research Question 1 (RQ1): How important to the successful facilitation of corporate worship is it to train the volunteer production team in areas related to technical expertise, theology, relational skill, and artistic expression?

Hypothesis 1: Those involved in facilitating corporate worship believe it is important to train the volunteer production team in areas related to technical expertise, theology, relational skills, and artistic expression.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are some of the ways churches can effectively train their volunteer production team to increase their technical expertise and knowledge, fluency in theology, relational skills, and artistic expression?

Hypothesis 2: Some of the ways churches can effectively train their volunteer production team to increase their technical expertise and knowledge, fluency in theology, relational skills, and artistic expression may include leadership modeling, biblical application to their craft, and community learning experiences.

The following two chapters discuss the research findings, conclusions that can be drawn from them, and areas that this study could not explore due to its limited scope.

CHAPTER IV: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH

**Introduction and Restatement of Purpose**

This study aims to investigate the different aspects of a volunteer technical artist's role in worship ministry, how important each element is in contributing to worship ministry, and how to train volunteers in those roles effectively. Technical directors and volunteers were surveyed to determine the importance that each group assigns to several aspects of the volunteer's roles in worship ministry (RQ1). Six technical directors were interviewed to further explore the effectiveness of their training methods. Additionally, volunteers were surveyed with respect to the effectiveness of training methods utilized in their preparation for ministry (RQ 2). The level of importance was measured using symmetric 5-point Likert scale questions that allowed the participants to rate the level of importance from "Not important at all" (1) to "Very important" (5).[1] Current training practices and methods were gathered through interview questions, and common themes have been summarized from the information from those interviews. The results of both data sets were further compared to determine if there is a correlation between the numerical level of importance that technical directors and volunteers assigned to different aspects of training and their current or ideal training practices. The data collected have been used to answer the following research questions:

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[1] The Likert scale was developed in 1932 to measure "human attitude," which can be defined as "preferential ways of behaving/reacting in a specific circumstance rooted in relatively enduring organization of belief and ideas (around an object, a subject or a concept) acquired through social interactions." The Likert scale offers a means of quantifying beliefs or preferences. Symmetricity refers to there being equal options on either side of neutrality, which in this case is represented by "three" on the scale.

Ankur Joshi et al., "Likert Scale: Explored and Explained," *British Journal of Applied Science and Technology,* 7(4) (2015): 397. https://eclass.aspete.gr/modules/document/file.php/EPPAIK269/5a7cc366dd963113c6923ac4a73c3286ab22.pdf

RQ1: How important to the successful facilitation of corporate worship is it to train the volunteer production team in areas related to technical expertise, theology, relational skill, and artistic expression?

RQ2: What are some of the ways churches can effectively train their volunteer production team to increase their technical expertise and knowledge, fluency in theology, relational skills, and artistic expression?

## Survey Results (Quantitative)

The survey included three parts. Part 1 gathered demographic and experiential information, Part 2 surveyed the participants regarding the level of importance they assign to certain aspects of church production ministry and training, and Part 3 included three open-ended questions about training methods, biblical foundations, and worship. The demographic information gathered in Part 1 of the survey included the participants' position at their church, how many years of experience they have in church production, whether they are active followers of Christ, the size of the church they attend, the demands of their role as a volunteer or director. The first three demographic areas were gathered to confirm participant eligibility. The size of the church was explored to determine the number of participants from each: small, medium, large, or mega-churches. The demographic questions presented in the survey are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Survey Questions, Part 1 – Demographic Information**

| Demographic Survey Questions |
| --- |
| I am a:<br>   1. Technical volunteer<br>   2. Technical director<br>   3. Worship director/pastor who supervises technical volunteers |
| How many years of experience do you have in technical arts ministry (either as a volunteer, director, or both)?<br>   1. 1–4 years<br>   2. 5+ years |

I am a follower of Christ.
1. Yes
2. No

Approximately how large is your church (measured in weekly attendance)?
1. 1–50
2. 51–250
3. 251–2000
4. 2000+

Do you feel there is time for you to continue to develop your skills technically within your weekly volunteer time commitment?
1. Yes
2. No

Is there any expectation for you to be a spiritual leader in the role in which you serve?
1. Yes
2. No

Does the time commitment you put in each week add to or take away from your ability to be personally ministered to at church?
1. My volunteer time adds to my ability to be personally ministered to at church.
2. My volunteer time takes away from my ability to be personally ministered to at church.

Demographics

**Participant Position**

Of the 26 survey respondents, seven are technical directors, fifteen are technical volunteers, and four are worship directors/pastors who supervise technical volunteers. All claim to be active followers of Christ.

**Years of Experience**

One of the requirements for participation outlined in the consent document is that participants in this study must have five or more years of experience. Three of the technical volunteers who responded have between one and four years of experience, while all other

participants have five or more years. For the integrity of the results, responses from those with less than five years of experience have been excluded from the analysis.

**Church Size**

Participants were asked about the size of the church where they work/serve. The answers participants could have chosen from are based on the information discussed in Chapter I of this study (footnote 1) regarding church size and are as follows:

- Small: 1–50

- Medium: 51–250

- Large: 251–2,000

- Mega-church: 2,000+

While this information is not crucial to answering the research questions for this study, it has been helpful to have the context in which participants are serving. The size of the church does not indicate production scope, although it can indicate other useful information, including how large the pool of volunteers may be. Figure 1 shows the percentages of the size of the churches that the survey respondents attend.

**Figure 1. Church Size of Participants (measured in weekly attendance)**
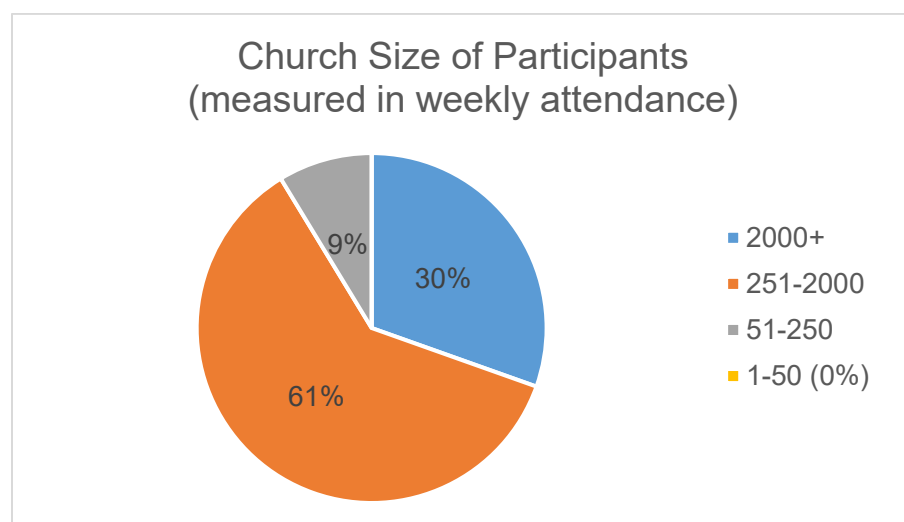
**Experience-Based Questions**

Participants were asked three questions regarding the expectations of their position and their experience in working for a church or serving as a volunteer in production ministry. The first question was, "Do you feel there is time for you to continue to develop your skills technically within your weekly volunteer time commitment?" Responses are shown in Table 2 below, organized according to respondent type.

**Table 2. Allowance for Skill Development within Weekly Volunteer Commitment**

| Q3.2. *Do you feel there is time for you to continue to develop your skills technically within your weekly volunteer time commitment?* | |
| --- | --- |
| **Technical Directors** | **Number of responses** |
| Yes | 8 |
| No | 1 |
| **Technical Volunteers** | |
| Yes | 11 |
| No | 1 |
| **Worship Pastor/Leader** | |
| Yes | 4 |
| No | 1 |

The second question was, "Is there any expectation for you to be a spiritual leader in the role in which you serve?" Responses are shown in Table 3 below, organized according to respondent type. The responses from technical directors and worship pastors are as expected. This question was designed to gather information specifically from volunteers about their expected spiritual role.

**Table 3. Expectations for Spiritual Leadership**

| Q3.3. *Is there any expectation for you to be a spiritual leader in the role in which you serve?* | |
| --- | --- |
| **Technical Directors** | **Number of responses** |
| Yes | 9 |
| No | 0 |
| **Technical Volunteers** | |
| Yes | 4 |
| No | 8 |

| Worship Pastor/Leader | |
|---|---|
| Yes | 5 |
| No | 0 |

The final question in Part 1 of the survey was whether the weekly time commitment

required of the participants added to or took away from their ability to be personally ministered

to at church. Responses are shown in Table 4 below, organized according to respondent type.

**Table 4. Weekly Volunteer Time Commitment and Personal Spiritual Development**

**Q13.3.** *Does the time commitment you put in each week add to or take away from your ability to be personally ministered to at church?*

| Technical Directors | Number of responses |
|---|---|
| Adds to | 2 |
| Takes away from | 4 |
| **Technical Volunteers** | |
| Adds to | 9 |
| Takes away from | 3 |
| **Worship Pastor/Leader** | |
| Adds to | 4 |
| Takes away from | 0 |

Importance of Volunteer Training in Facilitation of Corporate Worship

Part 2 of the survey contained sixteen questions aimed to determine how important

technical directors, volunteers, and worship pastors/leaders view certain aspects of volunteer

training to be in facilitating corporate worship. These questions were not presented to the

participants with any specific categorizations, but the researcher categorized the questions

separately according to the previously determined four areas of volunteer training: technical

skills and knowledge, theological knowledge and application to craft, relational connectivity, and

artistry/worship. Each of these questions is presented below with an analysis of the level of

importance assigned by two groups of respondents: technical volunteers and technical team

leaders (technical directors and worship pastors/leaders). The responses of the six technical

directors who have answered these same questions in interviews instead of through the survey have been included in this discussion.

The response options for each of these questions were on a 5-point Likert scale that allowed respondents to choose from the following: 1 = not important at all, 2 = somewhat unimportant, 3 = neutral, 4 = important, 5 = very important. The overall importance of each question was calculated by finding the median of the numerical responses. Table 5 shows the Likert scale questions in Part 2 of the survey.

**Table 5. Survey Questions, Part 2 – Likert Scale Questions**

| Likert Scale Survey Questions |
|---|
| Instructions: *Please answer each question based on the level of importance you would attribute to each item. Consider 3 to be "Neutral."* |
| How important is it for technical volunteers to know and be able to execute more than one skill (i.e., sound, lighting, ProPresenter, etc.)? |
| How important is it for technical volunteers to cultivate a personal walk with the Lord? |
| How important is it for technical volunteers to grow in spiritual maturity over time? |
| How important is it for technical volunteers to be able to attend services without any responsibilities on occasion? |
| How important would you consider team building to be for the success of a team of technical artist volunteers? |
| How important to you is it for technical volunteers to feel like they are part of a team on Sunday mornings? |
| How important is it for technical volunteers to experience Christian community within the team on which they serve? |
| How important is it for technical volunteers to experience Christian community outside the team on which they serve? |
| How important is it for technical volunteers to know their pastor well? |

| |
|---|
| How important is it for technical volunteers to feel comfortable being able to communicate directly with their pastor regarding technical needs/issues? |
| How important is it for technical volunteers to feel comfortable being able to communicate directly with their pastor regarding personal needs? |
| How important is it for technical volunteers to have a personal understanding of the message being sung and preached? |
| How important is it for technical volunteers to be able to teach others about the technical arts? |
| How important is it for the team of volunteers to be able to spiritually mentor others? |
| How important is it that the production team members are also musicians? |
| How important is it for a volunteer technical artist to be able to communicate a technical issue to someone who is not technically inclined? |

**Technical**

When asked about the importance of technical volunteers being able to execute more than one skill (i.e., sound, lighting, ProPresenter, etc.), the median numerical response was 4 (important).[2] Of the 17 technical directors and worship pastors/leaders who participated, two did not respond. Based on their responses, technical team *leaders* believe it is important for volunteers to know and execute more than one technical skill. The majority of responses were distributed between "neutral" (3) and "important" (4), with a median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 4 (important).

Based on their responses, technical team *volunteers* believe it is important for volunteers to know and execute more than one technical skill. Most responses fell between "neutral" (3) and "important" (4), with a median of importance assigned by technical volunteers of 4 (important).

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[2] "Overall importance" is the median for all responses from both volunteers and team leaders.

Figure 2 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 2. Importance of knowing more than one technical skill**
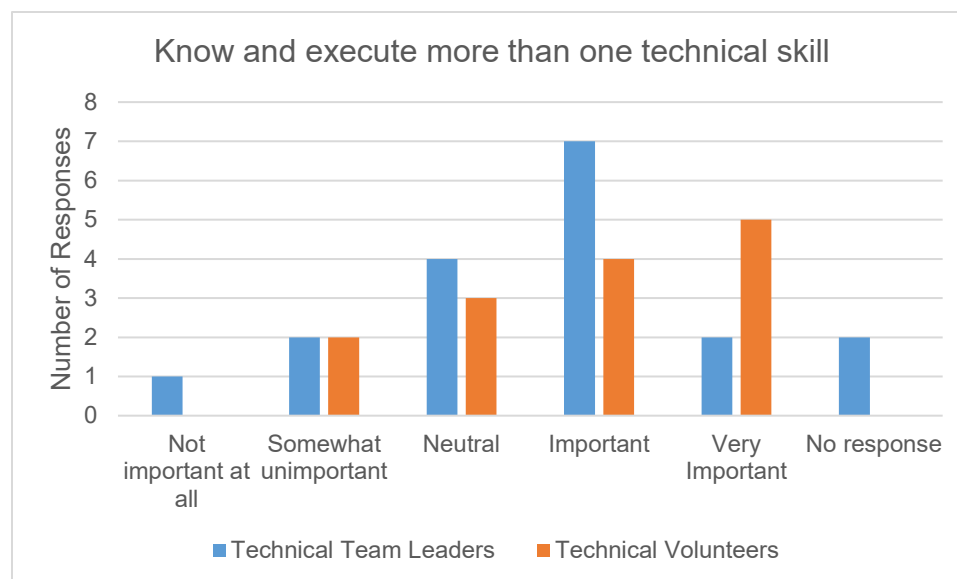


When asked about the importance of technical volunteers being able to train others in the technical arts, the overall importance assigned by all participants was 4 (important). This question deals with the technical proficiency of the volunteer and their relational ability to communicate knowledge. According to the results of the interviews discussed in the next section of this chapter, most training for church production teams takes place either during band rehearsals or live during worship services. This requires a volunteer who is teaching to be able to impart the knowledge and hard skills needed for the job to someone else while simultaneously completing their responsibilities successfully, which would indicate a higher level of practiced surety and focus on the part of the volunteer.

Based on their responses, technical team *leaders* believe that it is important for the volunteers on their team to be able to train others in the technical arts. The median of importance

assigned by technical team leaders of 4 (important), and all responses were "neutral" (3) or above.

Based on their responses, technical team *volunteers* believe it is important for volunteers to be able to train others in the technical arts. Most volunteers responded that this was an important part of their skillset, with a median of importance assigned by technical team volunteers of 4 (important). Figure 3 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 3. Level of Importance of Ability to Train Others in Technical Arts**
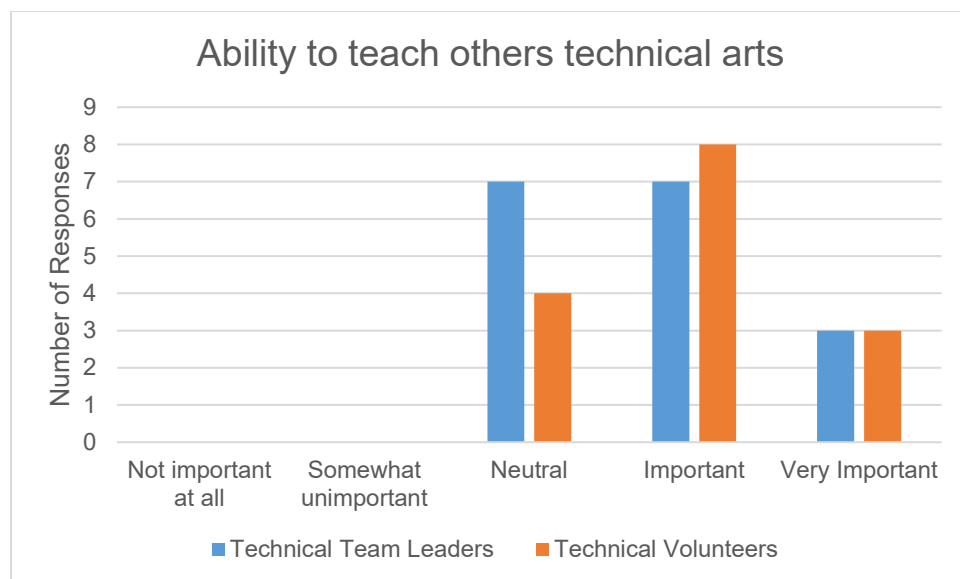


The line of questioning in the survey assumes that technical knowledge is a given for a volunteer member of the production team because that is the basis for their presence on the team. Therefore, only a few questions were asked of participants relating directly to their technical expertise. That topic has been covered by many writers of technical guides and online resources, as discussed in Chapter II: Review of Related Literature. If an overall importance score was given to technical knowledge and expertise, based on the median responses to the above two questions, technical team leaders and their volunteers believed it was important for production

team volunteers to be technically skilled, with an overall score of 4 (important). More insight into their responses is discussed with the interview results later in this chapter.

**Theological**

When asked about the importance of technical volunteers cultivating a personal walk with the Lord, the overall median response was 5 (very important). Based on their responses, technical team *leaders* believe that it is very important for volunteers to cultivate a personal walk with the Lord. The most common answer to this question was "very important," with a median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 5 (very important).

Based on their responses, technical team *volunteers* believe it important for volunteers to cultivate a personal walk with the Lord. All responses were either "important" (4) or "very important" (5), with a median of importance assigned by technical volunteers of 4.5 (between the rankings of "important" (4) and "very important" (5)). Figure 4 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 4. Importance of Cultivating a Personal Walk with The Lord**
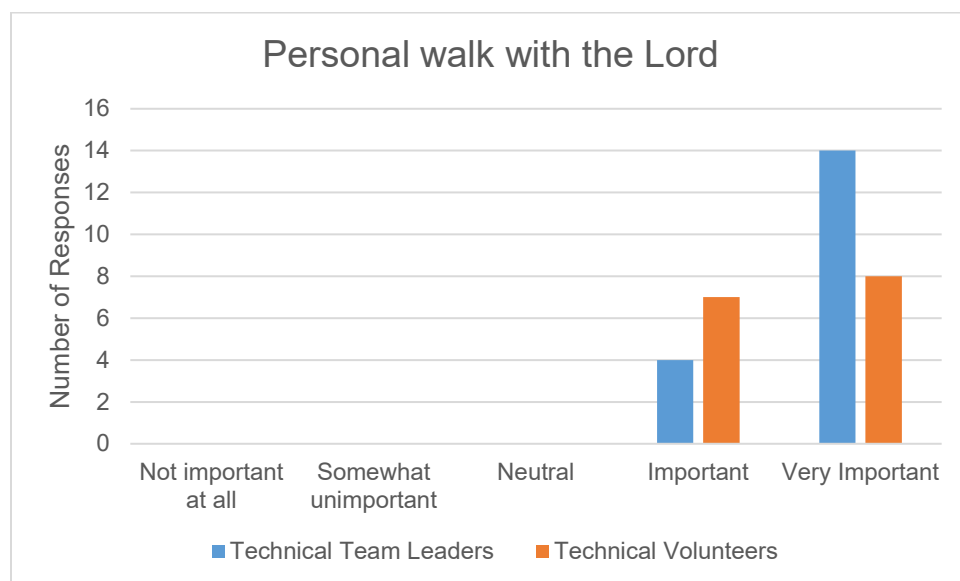
Similarly, participants were also asked to rate the importance of volunteers growing in spiritual maturity over time. The overall importance assigned by all participants was 5 (very important). Based on their responses, most technical team *leaders* believe that it is very important for volunteers to cultivate a personal walk with the Lord. Most respondents chose "very important" (5), with a median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 5 (very important).

Based on their responses, technical team *volunteers* agree that it is very important (5) for volunteers to grow in spiritual maturity over time. All responses were either "important" (4) or "very important" (5), with a median of importance assigned by technical volunteers of 5 (very important). Figure 5 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 5. Importance of Growing in Spiritual Maturity over Time**
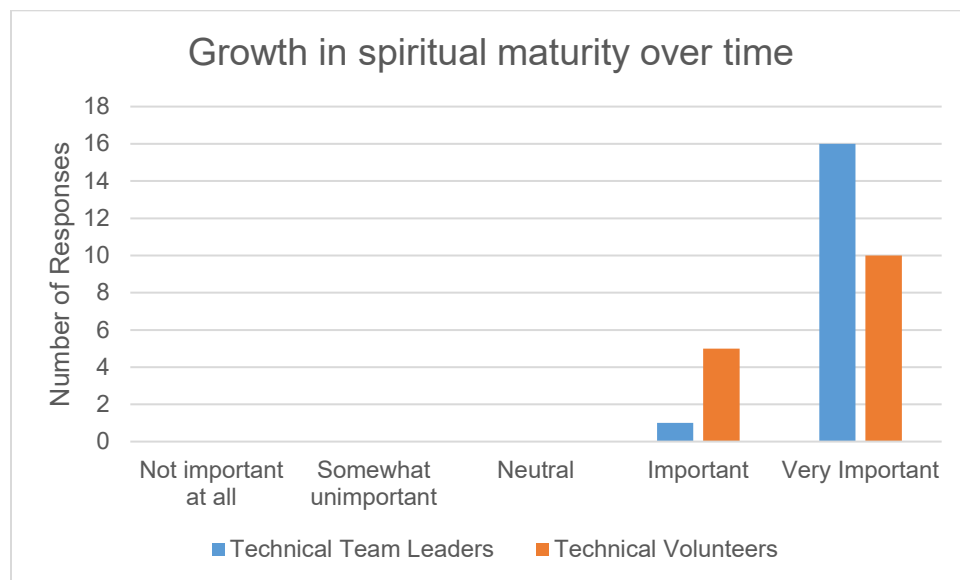


When asked about the importance of technical volunteers having the ability to attend services without any responsibilities on occasion, the overall importance assigned by all participants was 5 (very important). Based on their responses, most technical team *leaders*

believe it is important for volunteers to attend worship services without any volunteer responsibilities on occasion. The responses for this question are split but lean heavily towards "very important" (5), with a median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 5.

The responses from *volunteers* were slightly more divided for this question. However, the data indicates that most volunteers believe it is very important (5) for them to be free to attend church services without any responsibilities on occasion. Most technical volunteers responded, "very important" (5), with a few answering that it was either "not important at all" (1), "neutral" (3), or "important" (4). The median of importance assigned by technical volunteers was 5 (very important). Figure 6 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 6. Importance of Attending Services without Responsibility**
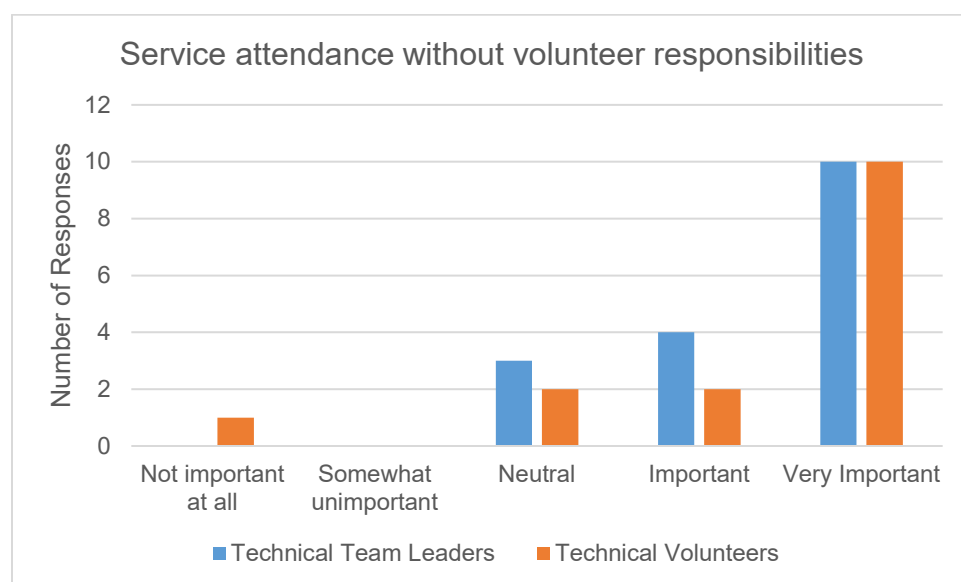


The final question strictly under the theological category is, "How important is it for technical volunteers to have a personal understanding of the message being sung/preached?" The overall importance assigned by all participants was 4 (important). Based on their responses, most technical team *leaders* believe that it is very important (5) for volunteers to understand what is

being sung/preached. Interestingly, there was more division among the answers to this question, with one team leader responding with "not important at all" (1). The answers that technical directors gave during interviews may clarify the numerical data. The technical directors that participated in interviews answered similarly to those that only participated in the survey but had the opportunity to explain their reasoning. Their answers range from the low end to the high end of importance. One technical director said, "Functionally, this is of very little importance…they can still do the job whether or not this is true."[3] On the other end of the scale was the response that it is very important (5), "Because helping them understand the content helps them understand what story we're trying to tell, and that better connects people with the gospel through what we're doing as a production team. It's a partnership with us and the people that are communicating the message."[4] The median of importance assigned by technical team leaders was 5 (very important).

The responses from *volunteers* mirrored those of the team leaders, with the data indicating that volunteers believe it is important that they understand the message being sung/preached. Most responses from technical volunteers were "neutral" (3), "important" (4), and "very important" (5). The median of importance assigned by technical volunteers was 4 (important). Figure 7 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

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[3] Jeremy Oldja, interview by author, Microsoft Teams meeting, Lynchburg, VA, October 5, 2022.

[4] Josh Moon, interview by author, Microsoft Teams meeting, Lynchburg, VA, October 14, 2022.

**Figure 7. Importance of Personal Understanding of Message**
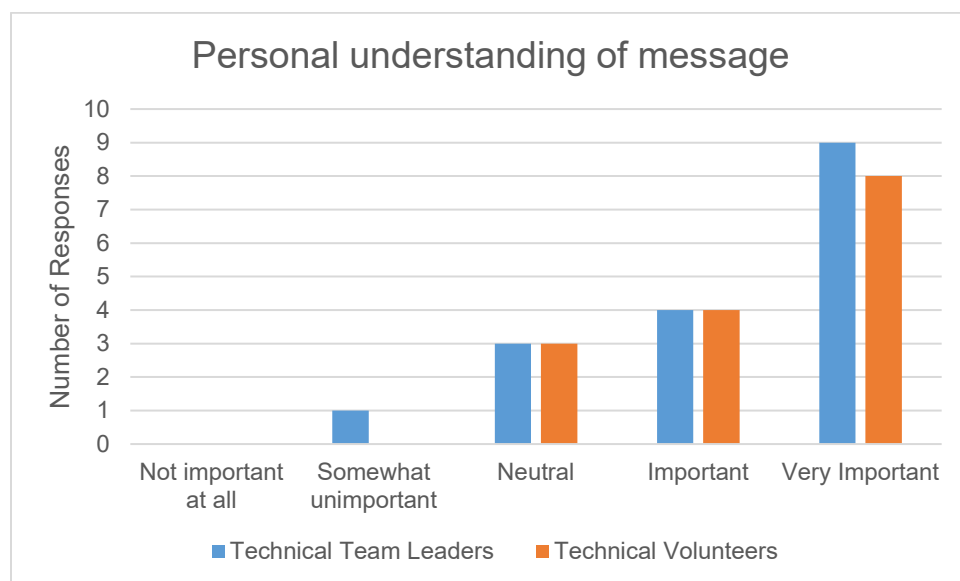


Through these questions, the researcher attempted to touch on spiritual growth and formation topics for volunteers. There are aspects of the theological application to the technical arts that will be discussed in the responses to the open-ended questions from Part 3 of the survey. If an overall importance score was given to theological knowledge, growth, and application to their craft, based on the median responses to the above three questions, technical team leaders and their volunteers believe it is very important (5) for production team volunteers to be able to grow spiritually while giving of their time and talents in their volunteer role.

**Relational**

The researcher found through the interviews that it is more challenging to ascertain the level of importance that technical team leaders place on their volunteers' relational skills (i.e., communication). Therefore, more questions related to the relational aspects of the volunteer's role were asked on the survey than questions relating to technical skills, theological knowledge, and artistry. The responses to these questions are presented below, followed by questions related to the relational/theological and relational/technical aspects of the volunteer's role.

The first four questions discussed how the production team of volunteers relates to one another. They addressed the importance of team building and participation in a Christian community, whether within the team of volunteers or outside of that team but within the church.

When asked how important they believed team building to be in the production team's success, the overall importance assigned by all participants was 4 (important). Based on their responses, most technical team *leaders* believe that team building is important to the success of the volunteer team. Answers from technical team leaders were split almost equally between "important" (4) and "very important" (5), with a median of importance of 4 (important).

The responses from *volunteers* were similar to those of the team leaders. The data indicates that volunteers believe team building is important to their success. Most volunteers responded with "important" (4) or "very important" (5). The median of importance assigned by technical volunteers was 4.5 (between "important" (4) and "very important" (5)). Figure 8 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 8. Importance of Team Building**
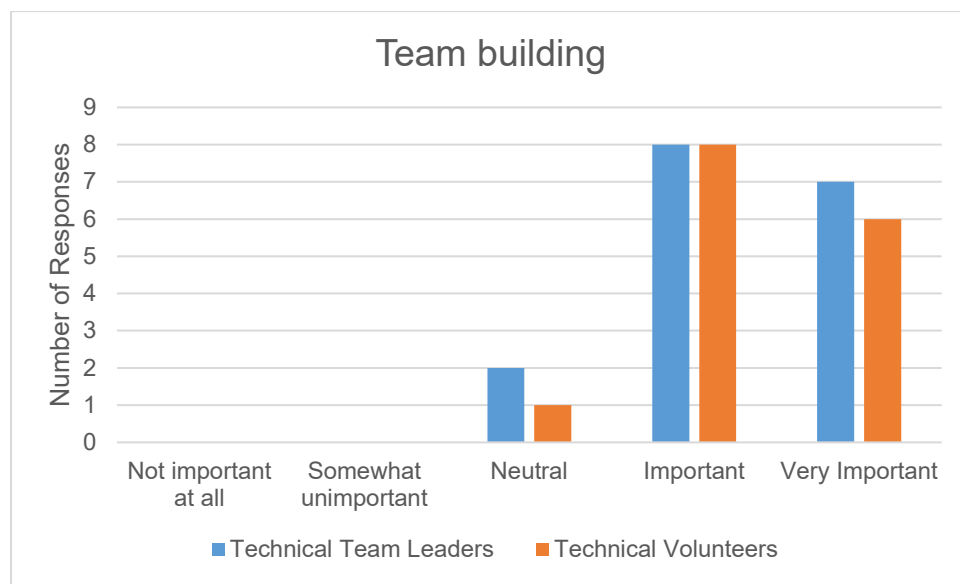
Similarly, participants were asked how important they feel it is for volunteers to feel they are part of a team on Sunday mornings. The overall importance assigned by all participants was 5 (very important). Based on their responses, most technical team *leaders* believe it is important for volunteers to feel as though they are part of a team. Three of the 17 technical team leaders who participated did not respond to this question. Most technical team leaders responded, "very important" (5), with a median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 5 (very important).

According to technical *volunteers*, it is very important (5) to feel that they are part of a team when serving on Sunday mornings. Volunteer responses fell between "important" (4) and "very important" (5), with the majority answering "very important" (5). The median of importance assigned by technical volunteers was 5 (very important). Figure 9 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 9. Importance of Volunteers Feeling They Are Part of a Team**
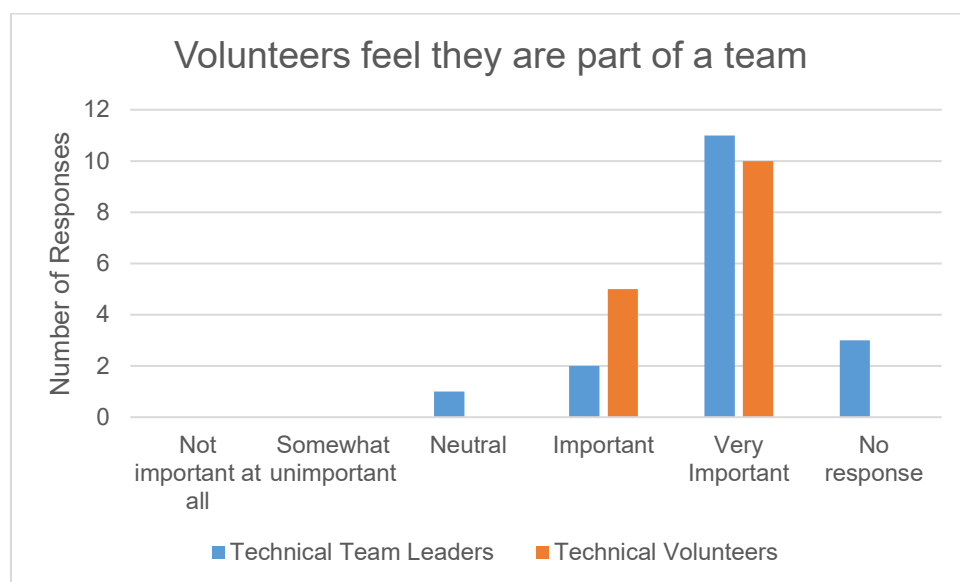
The following two questions were similar and asked how important it is for technical volunteers to be part of a Christian community and, more specifically, whether it is important for that community to be within the team or outside the team. When asked how important they believe it is for volunteers to be part of a Christian community within the team with whom they serve, the overall importance assigned by all participants was 5 (very important). Based on their responses, most technical team *leaders* believe that it is important for volunteers to experience Christian community within their team. The technical directors who answered this question as part of an interview said that it was "neutral" (3) or "not important" (1) if volunteers have a community within the church, regardless of whether it is a function of the volunteer team itself or in other groups within the church, such as Bible studies or small groups. Most responses to this question were split almost equally between "important" (4) and "very important" (5), with a median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 5 (very important).

The responses from *volunteers* were similar to those of the team leaders, but volunteers generally placed a higher level of importance on community within their team. Most answers from technical volunteers were either "important" (4) or "very important" (5), with the median of importance assigned by technical volunteers of 5 (very important). Figure 10 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 10. Importance of Community within Volunteer Team**



Similarly, participants were asked how important they felt it was for volunteers to experience Christian community outside the team on which they serve. The overall importance assigned by all participants was 5 (very important). Based on their responses, most technical team *leaders* believe it is very important (5) for volunteers to be part of a community outside the production team. Most responses from technical team leaders fell under "very important" (5), with the median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 5 (very important).

According to most technical *volunteers*, it is important that they experience Christian community outside the volunteer team on which they serve. The majority of volunteers responded with "important" (4), although "somewhat unimportant" (2), and "neutral" (3) received one vote each. The median of importance assigned by technical volunteers was 4 (important). Figure 11 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 11. Importance of Community outside Volunteer Team**
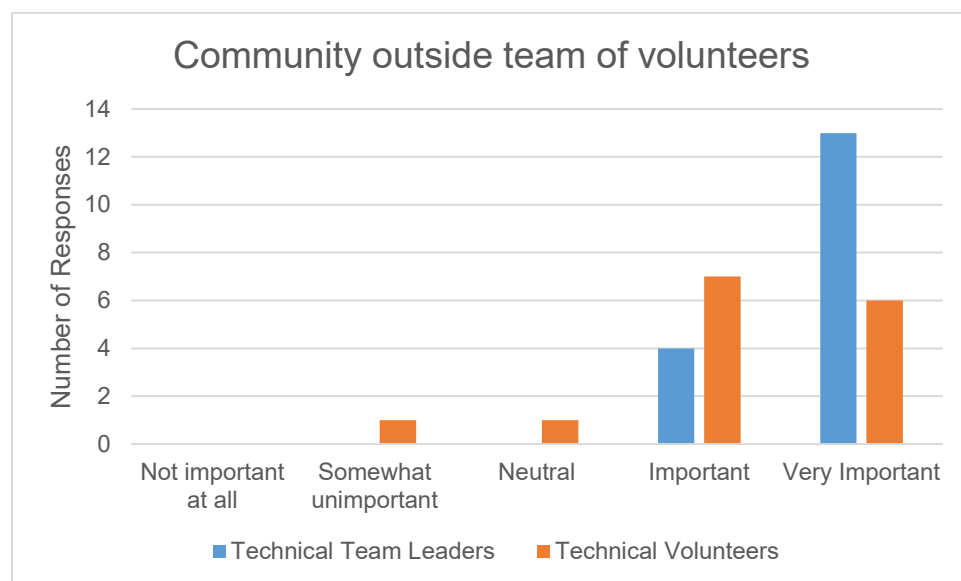


It is worth noting that the team leader and volunteer responses shown in Figures 10 and 11 were almost exactly switched for the two questions regarding Christian community. While team leaders believe it is important for volunteers to be part of a community outside the production team, volunteers think it is important for them to have community within the team of volunteers.

The following three questions address how technical team volunteers relate to their pastors. The production team leadership hierarchy and communication chains can differ significantly from church to church. This topic is not covered at length in any existing literature that has been found by the researcher, so these questions were included to begin the discussion. These are included under the relational skills category because the volunteer-pastor dynamic can be challenging to navigate due to both parties have very different demands placed on them by their functional roles in facilitating the worship service. These questions were not asked during the interviews, so responses are drawn exclusively from the survey results.

When asked how important they believe it is for volunteers to know their pastor well, the overall importance assigned by all participants was 4 (important). Based on their responses, most technical team *leaders* believe that it is important for volunteers to know their pastor well. Most technical team leaders responded that they thought it was either "neutral" (3) or "important" (4). The technical director that responded with "not important at all" (1) supervises volunteers at a campus that simulcasts their services, so the pastor is not physically present. The median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 4 (important).

Proportionally, more volunteers than team leaders think it is important for them to know their pastor well. Most technical *volunteers* also say that they believe it is "important" (4), with an equal distribution of answers for "neutral" (3) and "very important" (5) as well. The median of importance assigned by technical volunteers was 4 (important). Figure 12 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 12. Importance of Knowing Pastor Well**

When asked how important they believe it is for volunteers to feel comfortable communicating directly with their pastor regarding technical needs/issues, the overall importance assigned by all participants was 4 (important). Based on their responses, most technical team *leaders* believe that it is either "important" (4) or "very important" (5) for volunteers to feel comfortable communicating technical needs directly to their pastor; however, there were a few answers in the "somewhat unimportant" (2) and "neutral" (3) range as well. The median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 4 (important).

The responses from volunteers are very similar to those from team leaders. Responses from technical *volunteers* indicate that they also believed it was "important" (4) or "very important" (5), with a few answering that they thought it was either "somewhat unimportant" (2) or "neutral" (3). The median of importance assigned by technical volunteers of 4.5 (between "important" (4) and "very important" (5)). Figure 13 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 13. Importance of Feeling Comfortable Communicating with Pastor about Technical Needs**
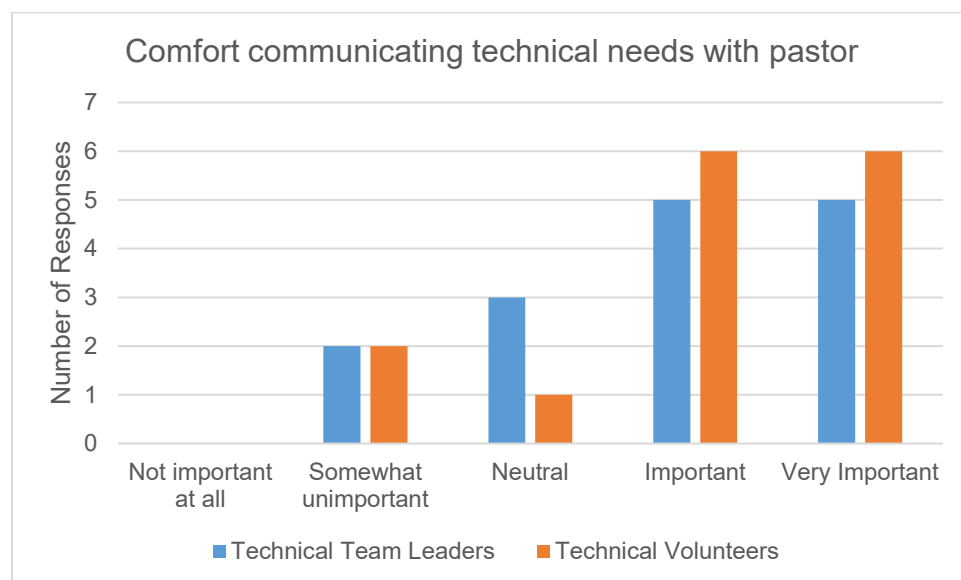
When asked how important they believe it is for volunteers to feel comfortable communicating directly with their pastor regarding personal needs, the overall importance assigned by all participants was 5 (very important). Based on their responses, technical team *leaders* believe that it is either "important" (4) or "very important" (5) for volunteers to feel comfortable communicating personal needs directly to their pastor, with the median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 5 (very important).

Based on their responses, most *volunteers* believe that it is "very important" (5) for them to feel comfortable communicating about personal needs with their pastor. The majority of responses from technical volunteers were "very important" (5), with a few answering that they believed it was either "important" (4) or "neutral" (3). The median of importance assigned by technical volunteers of 5 (very important). Figure 14 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 14. Importance of Feeling Comfortable Communicating Personal Needs to Pastor**
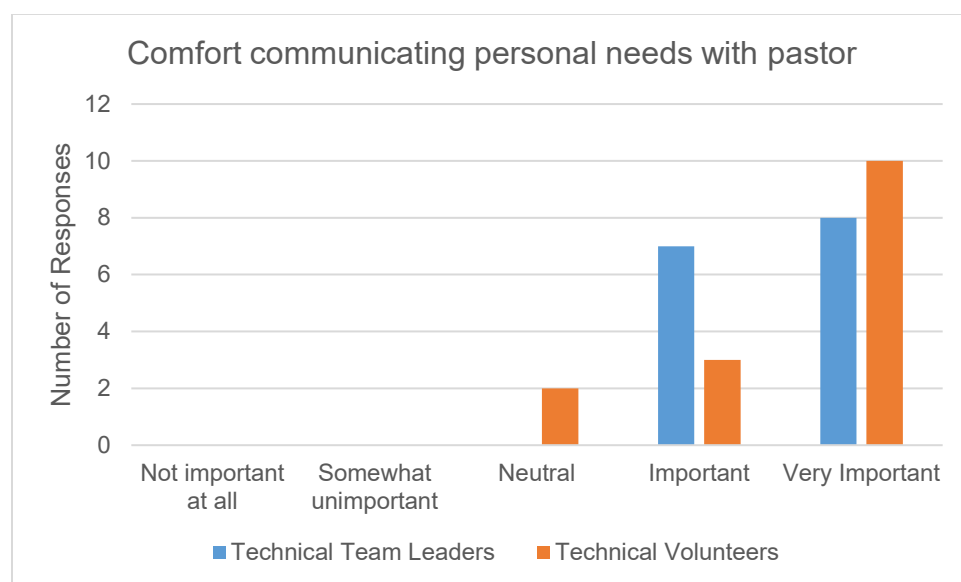


The last two questions received mixed answers from the technical directors who participated in the interviews. The answers given seemed to depend on the size of the volunteer

team and the structure of leadership. All technical team *leaders* believe that it is important for volunteers to have access to their pastor but do not necessarily believe that technical volunteers need to be able to communicate about technical issues directly with the pastor. The stated rationale is that if there is a technical director on staff with a well-established relationship with the pastor, the volunteers should communicate technical needs/issues through the technical director rather than directly to the pastor because the technical director may have more peripheral knowledge of why a request is being asked of the production team by the pastor, for example, or simply for ease of workflow when preparing on Sunday mornings.

The questions related to the relational skills and connectivity of the volunteer has covered a broad spectrum of information, including the need for volunteers to experience Christian community, the importance of team building, and their relationship with their pastor. If an overall importance score was given to the relational aspects of the production volunteer's role, based on the median responses to the above seven questions, technical team leaders and their volunteers believed it was important (4) or very important (5) for production team volunteers to experience Christian community, to feel as though they are part of a team, and to have a certain level of comfort communicating with their pastor.

**Relational/Theological**

Some questions on the survey have a cross-over between two of the four categories. The first of them is how important they think it is for production volunteers to be able to mentor others spiritually. This question speaks to their spiritual maturity and relationships with other believers or non-believers. The overall importance assigned by all participants was 4 (important). Based on their responses, technical team *leaders* believe that it is either "neutral" (3) or

"important" (4) for volunteers to be able to spiritually mentor others, with the median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 4 (important).

Based on their responses, most *volunteers* believe that it is "important" (4) or "very important" (5) for them to be able to spiritually mentor others, although answers were evenly distributed between "neutral" (3), "important" and "very important" (5). The median of importance assigned by technical volunteers of 4 (important). Figure 15 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 15. Importance of Volunteers' Ability to Spiritually Mentor Others**
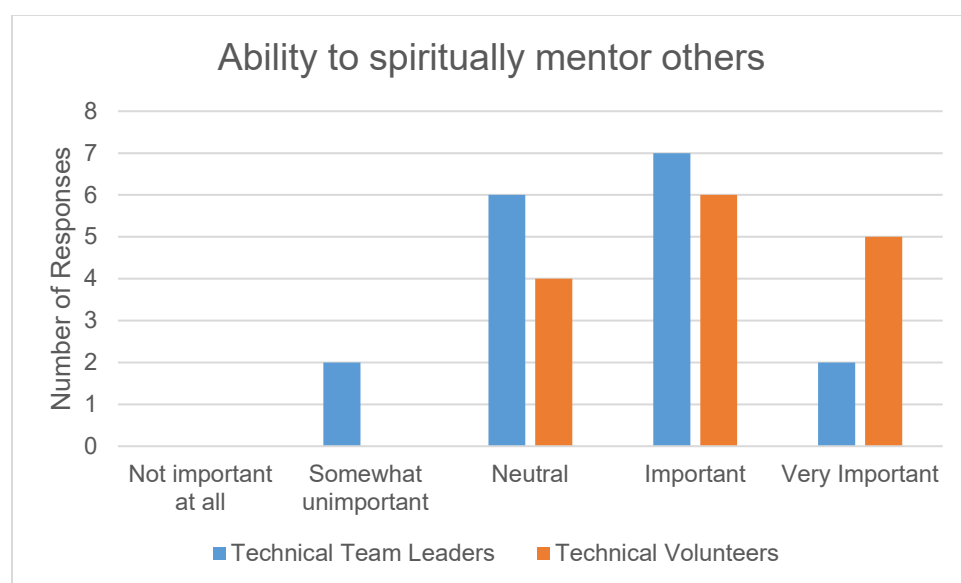


**Relational/Technical**

Participants were asked how important they believe it is for volunteers to be able to communicate technical issues to someone who is not technically inclined. This question speaks to their technical knowledge and ability to communicate with different types of people. They must know the technical details well enough to understand what is essential for the other person to know and how to put that into lay terms. The overall importance assigned by all participants was 4 (important). Based on their responses, technical team *leaders* believe that it is neither

important nor unimportant ("neutral") for volunteers to be able to communicate technical issues to someone who is not technically inclined, with the median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 3.

Based on their responses, most *volunteers* believe that it is "important" (4) for them to be able to communicate technical issues to someone who is not technically inclined. The median of importance assigned by technical volunteers of 4 (important). This is notably one of the only questions asked on the survey where the answers from team leaders and volunteers differ by one entire level of importance on the Likert scale. Some insight can be gained from the answers that technical directors gave to this question in the interviews. Most technical team leaders say that it could be a valuable skill for a volunteer, but it is, in most cases, made unnecessary by the fact that the technical director is present. As far as the researcher knows, many volunteers who have responded to the surveys serve with the same technical directors who have participated in the interview portion. The difference in their responses shows a disconnect between the volunteers' experiences and the team leaders' intention to be that point of contact whenever something needs to be communicated to someone outside the tech team. Figure 16 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 16. Importance of Volunteers Being Able to Communicate Technical Issues to Non-Technically Inclined People**
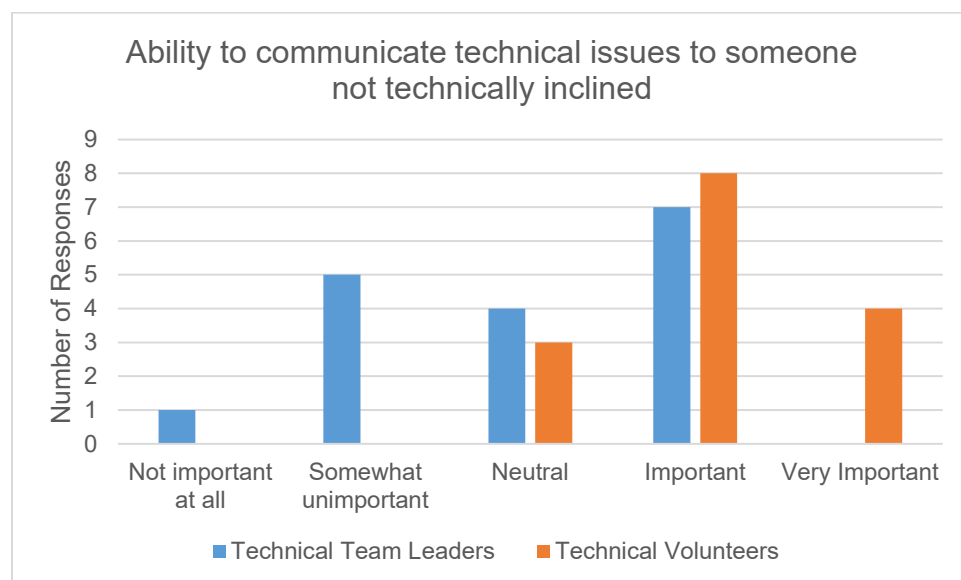


**Artistic**

The TA's artistry was more difficult to assess through Likert scale questions, so the topic was approached more during interviews and with the open-ended questions on the survey. For the survey, participants were asked, specifically, how important they believe it is for TA volunteers to be musicians. Due to this project's scope, only one question regarding this topic was included in the survey. Because most aspects of production have something to do with music (i.e., mixing sound, advancing ProPresenter lyric slides, making camera shots and cuts sync with the style of music), this was an appropriate place to start the inquiry.

When asked how important it is for the volunteer TA to also be a musician, the overall importance assigned by all participants was 2 (somewhat unimportant). Technical team *leaders* indicated that they see this skill as either "neutral" (3) or "somewhat unimportant" (2), with the median of importance assigned by technical team leaders of 3 (neutral). Two team leaders believed musicianship was an important aspect of the volunteers' role. Those who responded to this question in the interviews explained their answers, with most thinking that musical

knowledge and ability can be helpful, especially in some specific areas, but that it is not necessary for the successful execution of producing a worship service.

Based on their responses, most *volunteers* believe that it is "not important at all" (1) or "neutral" (3) for them to be musicians, although there was more distribution among all answer choices than those of the team leaders. One volunteer answered that they believe it is important for them to be a musician. The median of importance assigned by technical volunteers of 1.5 (between "not important at all" (1) and "somewhat unimportant" (2)). Figure 17 represents the number of responses each Likert level of importance received from technical team leaders and volunteers.

**Figure 17. Importance of Production Volunteers Being Musicians**



Do production team members need to be musicians?
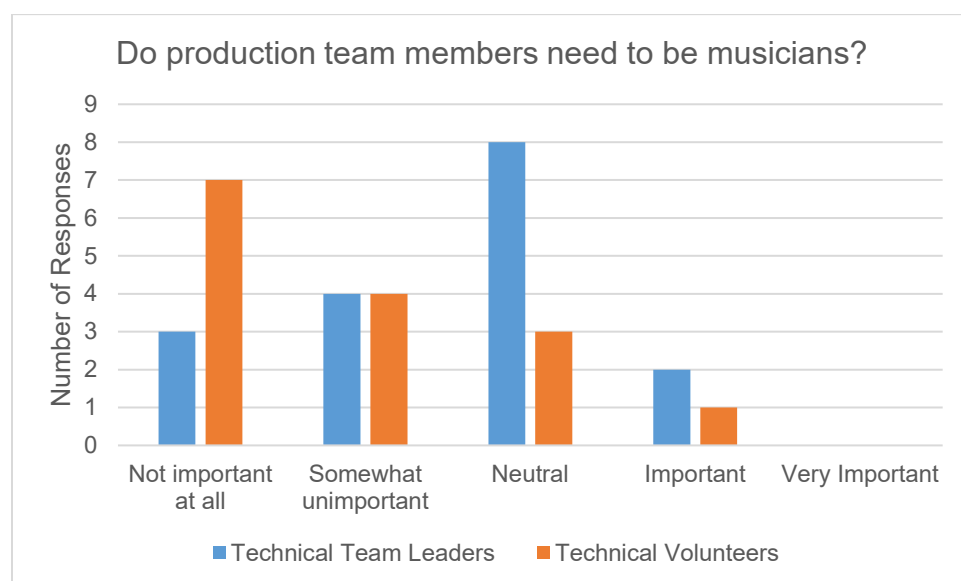
**Open-Ended Results**

Part 3 of the survey allowed participants to respond to three open-ended questions about their understanding of the technical arts as a form of worship, the scriptural basis for having technical arts present in a worship service, and how they believe churches could effectively train their volunteer teams in all areas including technical knowledge, theological application,

relationships, and artistry. The open-ended questions are shown in Table 6. The responses are

presented below in Tables 7, 8, 9, and 10.

**Table 6. Survey Questions, Part 3 – Open-Ended Questions**

| Open-Ended Questions |
| --- |
| What is your understanding of technical arts as a form of worship? |
| What is your understanding of the scriptural basis for having technical arts present in a worship service? |
| What are some ways that you feel the church can effectively train their volunteer production team to be more equipped to fulfill all aspects of their role (i.e., technical skills, theological/biblical application, relationships, artistry, etc.)? |

**Technical Arts as a Form of Worship**

First, participants were asked, "What is your understanding of technical arts as a form of

worship?" Their responses were coded to find common themes in their answers. A summary of

the most frequent themes is presented in Table 7.

**Table 7. Technical Arts as a Form of Worship**

| *What is your understanding of technical arts as a form of worship?* | *Frequency* |
| --- | --- |
| It is a form of worship through giving of time/talents/gifts back to God | 9 |
| It helps to create an environment in which others can worship without distraction | 8 |
| It can be used to reach those who can't worship in person or without technology | 4 |

Many other answers to this question are related closely to those shown in Table 7. Some

responses do not reaffirm that the technical arts are a form of worship but rather a hindrance to

the production teams' ability to worship while concentrating on their tasks. This, along with the

response that the technical arts are "more a form of service than of worship," reveals that there is

not a common understanding of the definition of the word "worship" among those who have

responded to the survey. The other responses that were not repeated as frequently show that there

are a variety of ways to correctly worship God, which are all expressed simultaneously as a volunteer or production team member serves, provided that their motivations are to bring glory to God and not themselves. Some of these forms of worship include:

- Helping to advance the gospel message, both for those physically present and watching online,

- Technical arts are creative worship, just as music or a painting would be considered creative worship,

- Technical arts encourage others to worship by observing the beauty of what someone else has created to reflect God's character, and

- Within a lifestyle of worship, technical arts are another way for those talented in such areas to use their gifts to worship.

Two participants added a qualifier to their answer and said that "motivation and/or intentionality is what distinguishes it as worship" and "all of these tools can either help us engage in worship or become objects of our worship." Based on many of the answers, most participants would agree that the technical arts are either a form of worship in themselves or that they support/facilitate the worship of others or both.

**Scriptural Basis for the Use of Technical Arts in Worship**

The second question participants were asked was, "What is your understanding of the scriptural basis for having technical arts present in a worship service?" Some merely responded that they either did not know or that there was no direct scriptural basis. Others answered with references to specific passages of Scripture with interpretation or application. Table 8 gives a summary of these passages and interpretations.

**Table 8. Scriptural Basis for Technical Arts in Worship (Team Leaders)**

| *What is your understanding of the scriptural basis for having technical arts present in a worship service?* | |
|---|---|
| Reference | Summary/Interpretation |
| Exodus 36:1 | *"Bezalel and Oholiab and every craftsman in whom the Lord has put skill and intelligence to know how to do any work in the* |

*construction of the sanctuary shall work in accordance with all that the Lord has commanded."*

"These guys were early facilitators of gatherings of God's people to worship. They used what was available at the time creating a place to worship."[5]

"We see examples in scripture of people using their artistic talents, whether it be in the Psalms, and of course there are thousands of references to worship offered through music. I feel like media is an extension of using the creative gifts we have to help facilitate worship."[6]

"Bezalel was the guy that made the building look awesome. It is cool to think that even back in their context, there were people that were doing something similar to us. The behind-the-scenes that nobody knows, the many hours that actually went into making the service flow. It's great that they don't know, right? I want you to be able to come in and not be thinking, 'these people have been here for four hours already.' I think there is part of it that is nice and awesome…The other thing that comes to mind is the different roles the Levites had. With the ark, and all the different pieces and parts, they would set the tent up every place they went, and all of those things that they were doing. It speaks to what we do, right? …God has called us and created us to be creative. What's the difference in how you lead worship with an electric guitar and how you're being creative in those ways? I look at what we do as exactly the same. I know that that's an act of worship to God."[7]

| | |
|---|---|
| Psalm 66:4 | *"All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name."* |
| Psalm 150:3–5 | *"Praise him with trumpet sound; praise him with lute and harp! Praise him with tambourine and dance; praise him with strings and pipe! Praise him with sounding cymbals; praise him with loud clashing cymbals!"* |
| | "Song, instrumental worship and public prayer are referenced and encouraged in scripture."[8] |

[5] Anonymous survey response.

[6] Bennett Stofer, interview by author, Microsoft Teams meeting, Lynchburg, VA, August 24, 2022.

[7] Justin Manny, interview by author, Microsoft Team meeting, Lynchburg, VA, September 8, 2022.

[8] Anonymous survey response.

| Matthew 25:14–30 | *Parable of the Talents* |
|---|---|
| | "Growing up, I loved computers…what I didn't realize is that God gave me a gift. In Matthew 25:14–31, the one who buried his talent was afraid and did nothing with it, while the others used their talents for the master and gathered more to serve him with."[9] |
| | "You make the best use of the technology you have at any given location and moment in time, without idolizing it and with a Kingdom focused, Christ-centered mindset helping guide how much or how little tech will [be] utilize[d]; weighing eternal opportunity costs at every turn."[10] |
| Acts 2:42 | *"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."* |
| | "Modern technical artists use the technologies available to us today to facilitate gatherings so people can hear, see and participate together."[11] |
| 1 Corinthians 9:19–23 | *"To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the Law I became like one under the law…I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some."* |
| | "There is a cultural basis for the use of technical arts. We know that culture is heavily influenced by technology and media. Therefore, we are to engage with unbelievers and believers alike in the context of their culture…The apostle Paul captured the cultural ideas of the people he was with and used them to win them to Christ. We should do the same since the technical arts are integral to communication in the highly digital and technological culture we live in."[12] |
| 1 Corinthians 10:23 | *"'All things are lawful,' but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful,' but not all things build up."* |
| | "In our culture around us, open your eyes and take a look. We are surrounded by iPhones and Google TV's and LED screens everywhere. Every cool business has an LCD screen in front of their business these days, right? We are inundated by technology, radio, television, social media, which social media is a massive |

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[9] Anonymous survey response.

[10] Anonymous survey response.

[11] Anonymous survey response.

[12] Anonymous survey response.

| | thing that has so many fingers right now. And I think there is all the permission, based on the two scriptures I quoted—all things are lawful (1 Cor. 10:23) and "to the Greek I became a Greek" (1 Cor. 9:19–23)—there's all the permission and even encouragement to engage people in something that makes sense to them. Now we're not going to sacrifice the truth of the word of God to make people comfortable, that's not what this is about, but if you're in a certain culture, act the culture."[13] |
|---|---|
| 1 Corinthians 12:12–31 | *One Body with Many Members* <br><br> "Technical arts enable the gospel to be sown in multiple soils, whether that is softening someone's approach to the Lord with mood lighting or appropriate sound or meeting them where they are in their home with a live stream. Tech teams are a part of the "feet" that carry the gospel. 1 Cor. 12:21 talks about the different parts of the body, and how they work together. Technical arts are a part of that body, needed for everything to work together in presenting the gospel."[14] |
| Colossians 3:16 | *"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God."* <br><br> "In modern times, the way we use music and preaching as tools for worship are not effectively presented without the technical arts."[15] |
| 1 Peter 4:10 | *"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace...."* <br><br> "In this day and age, many individuals have a natural ability in technical arts. God calls us to use our gifts, and if technical arts is one of them, I believe He calls us to use it for Him."[16] |

It should be noted that the responses summarized in Table 8 are all from technical team leaders except for the references given in the book of Psalms, meaning all but one of the direct Scripture references given in response to this question have been provided by technical directors

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[13] Oldja interview.

[14] Anonymous survey response.

[15] Anonymous survey response.

[16] Anonymous survey response.

or worship pastors/leaders. Only one volunteer response contained a direct scriptural reference, although some references could be derived from their responses. All volunteer responses are shown in Table 9.

**Table 9. Scriptural Basis for Technical Arts in Worship (Volunteer Responses)**

| *What is your understanding of the scriptural basis for having technical arts present in a worship service?* | *Frequency* |
|---|---|
| "None" or no response | 3 |
| "Technical artists facilitate the spreading of the Gospel. We utilize audio-visual tools to facilitate the Gospel being communicated clearly, people connecting with God, and God connecting with His people. The people and the equipment are tools God can use to reach people." | |
| "There are numerous examples of technical elements in worship throughout the Bible. Smoke, fire, sound, things that help to bring about emotions that draw the worshiper to the throne." | |
| "I'm not sure, perhaps because Jesus spoke in parables, a way for people to better understand complicated spiritual truths? Technical arts assist [sic] with helping people of our culture better understand spiritual truths, and worship." | |
| "It is like said above, it is a spiritual act of worship…and equivalent to playing an instrument. All are tied into presenting an environment suitable for worship and deeper relationship with Christ." | |
| "Specifically, these technologies did not exist in Biblical times, but they did have their forms of it in temples, scrolls, props for stories and most likely some forms of lighting. For the same reasons as today, those technologies set the environment or illustrated a point." | |
| "Song, instrumental worship and public prayer are referenced and encouraged in scripture. Psalm 66:4, Psalm 150:3–5" | |
| "To enhance the worship experience but [not] stand out or get in the way [of] God's movement" | |
| "It is another form of worship" | |
| "Technical arts can help in clearly communicating the gospel to those who hear it locally and remotely" | |

If, as revealed by responses to previous questions, most participants—both volunteer and paid—view technical arts either as a form of worship or as an integral support to the worship service, then there must be a biblical foundation and justification for its use. Without biblical support, technical arts in worship are merely an addition of human understanding rather than guided by the Spirit for Kingdom purposes.

**Effective Training Practices**

The final question on the survey was, "What are some ways that you feel the church can effectively train their volunteer production team to be more equipped to fulfill all aspects of their role (i.e., technical skills, theological/biblical application, relationships, artistry, etc.)?" The survey responses (excluding the interview responses) were coded, and the most common answers are shown below in Table 10.

**Table 10. Effective Training Practices (Survey Results)**

*What are some ways that you feel the church can effectively train their volunteer production team to be more equipped to fulfill all aspects of their role (i.e., technical skills, theological/biblical application, relationships, artistry, etc.)?*

| | Frequency | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Technical Team Leaders | Technical Volunteers | Total |
| Training sessions outside of Sunday morning (for technical training and fellowship) | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Mentorship between volunteers (both technical and spiritual) | 1 | 4 | 5 |
| Conferences, seminars, and online training videos | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Have non-production time available to practice | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Fellowship between team members outside of service times | 1 | 2 | 3 |

The responses from volunteers and technical team leaders have been separated because the perspectives from the two sides differ slightly for this question. More volunteers value mentorship between older and younger volunteers as a means of both technical training and discipleship, whereas this is less important to team leaders. There is an overall theme from volunteers and leaders emphasizing relationships, spiritual and personal well-being, and Christian community over exclusively pursuing excellence in production. Team leaders'

responses are much more diversified, with most emphasizing that technical training is important but should be second to:

- Calling people to a mission, including character building, community gathering, and competence training;

- Shepherding people's souls first and their skills last;

- Encouraging the team to pursue Jesus and be in Christian community;

- Asking about volunteers' personal lives, feelings, and mental health;

- Building relationships as a team outside of tasks that must be completed;

- Meeting up and talking about Scripture, praying as a group; and

- Training on production philosophy and artistry

Another unexpected result that has been discovered during the interview stage is that two of the six participants discuss how the scope of production at their church has been reduced significantly over the past years to train both the technical volunteers and the congregation in their mission to spread the gospel rather than pursuing the highest level of production. One interview participant, Technical Director 1 (TD1), remarked that their church (C1) realized in 2016 that people who need Christ are not as willing to attend a church on Sunday morning as they once were, which meant that creating "seeker" friendly services was not having the same effect that it once did. In response, the church shifted its focus to fostering its congregation to be disciples who can make disciples. For production, this meant streamlining and simplifying their process so that the congregation and volunteers could focus more on spiritual obedience. Before 2016, C1 had been pursuing a high level of production, but has since learned that "Focusing too much on production quality and the newest technology can easily lead to the church becoming

internally focused rather than looking outward to the people who need Jesus."[17] While it may seem that deemphasizing production takes away the opportunity for TAs to apply their talents in worship, TD1 commented that it was actually more worshipful to serve the body through their skills rather than through singing songs. TD1 added that if serving the church body in corporate worship through the technical arts is truly a calling, the scope of production holds less weight than helping to facilitate the training of the congregation to pursue their callings as Christ-followers.

## Interview Results (Qualitative)

### Introduction

At the start of the research process, interviews were the only means of collecting data. Invitations to participate in an interview were sent to twenty-eight technical directors, worship pastors, and media directors. Contact information was found by searching church directories and contact lists on church-specific websites. Contacts were also sought through mutual connections from friends, former classmates, and acquaintances of the researcher. Invitation emails were sent to these contacts per the IRB approval, and eight responded favorably to participating. Due to life circumstances, only six completed the interview. All participants were asked via the informed consent document whether they agreed to have their full name and identity published in this final paper. Only one participant chose complete anonymity. This participant will be referred to as TD1 (technical director 1), and the church at which they are employed as C1 (church 1). All

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[17] Technical Director 1 (TD1), interview by author, Microsoft Teams meeting, Lynchburg, VA, October 13, 2022.

other names and places of employment are accurate to the participants' identities. Table 11 gives

a summary of this information for each participant:

**Table 11. Interview Participants**

| Participant Name | Church or Organization | Position Held |
|---|---|---|
| Noah Felten | First Church (First Church of Demotte) *Hebron, IN* | Worship Director, *Hebron Campus* |
| Justin Manny | The Summit Church *Durham, NC* | Production Pastor, *all campuses* |
| Josh Moon | Waymaker Church *Forest, VA* | Production Director |
| Jeremy Oldja | Liberty Live Church *Southeast Virginia* | Global Production Specialist; Production Director, *Smithfield Campus* |
| Bennett Stofer | First Baptist Church *Jacksonville, FL* | Media Director |
| TD1 (Technical Director 1) | C1 (Church 1) | Technical Director |

Interviews were intended to be 60 minutes long, with a potential follow-up interview if

there was material left to cover at the end of the first interview. At the beginning of the research

process, interviewees completed a very long and rigorous line of questioning. As interviews

progressed, it was determined that the length of the interviews and follow-ups was pushing the

boundaries of what had been approved through the IRB and what had been presented to the

participants in the recruitment and consent documents. The first three participants completed the

initial 60-minute interview and a follow-up interview that lasted another 60 minutes. One other

participant agreed to extend the initial interview another 30 minutes mid-interview to avoid the

need for follow-up. Therefore, the last four interview participants were only asked some

questions (about 10 fewer than the first participants). The researcher attempted to choose the

questions that would yield the most helpful information in the designated amount of time.

Participants were asked almost all the Likert scale questions included in the survey, which was

created later in the research process, and their answers to those questions were analyzed with the survey results. The remaining questions and their answers are examined here.

## Interview Results

Participants were each asked questions related to the training and development of their volunteer team and elements surrounding that, such as their church's current training practices, their understanding of worship, and how production impacts the worship practices and beliefs of the congregation. The results are discussed categorically below, beginning with how technical directors and volunteers believe production and worship relate, then moving to the roles and responsibilities of the production team volunteers, and finally, discussing current and ideal training practices.

### Production and Worship

One of the most common themes throughout the interviews was the connection between production and worship. The researcher did not necessarily plan for this to be the case, but it became evident throughout the interviews that this topic was something that most of the technical directors spent time investing in and thinking about within their weekly responsibilities as technical directors. They were asked a series of questions that related to the topic. Those questions are listed below in Table 12, and their responses are discussed below.

**Table 12. Questions Relating to Production and Worship**

| Questions relating to production and worship |
| --- |
| **Q19.** What are your thoughts on worship in the context of your production team? |
| **Q20.** What are your thoughts on worship in the context of the production team within the larger context of the church body? |
| **Q31.** What is your perspective on the volunteer team and their role as servants in the church? **Q31.1.** Does this perspective affect how you and your team approach requests from church leadership? |
| **Q36.** What is your perspective on the technical arts as a form of worship? |

Production as Corporate Worship

Interview participants responded to the questions above in two different contextual categories: corporate worship and personal worship. Practically speaking, the role of production in the church is to facilitate corporate worship by amplifying the gospel message so that more people can hear, see, and participate. Within that baseline purpose, different production philosophies can inform how it is accomplished. One theme in the technical directors' responses likens the modern church production team to the Merarites in the Old Testament. Justin Manny, the Production Pastor at The Summit Church in Durham, NC, elaborates on this parallel: "The [technical artist's] role is not just a behind-the-scenes role, [where] nobody notices it unless you mess up. You're creating environments that help to engage people, so to take it that seriously is part of the calling to be part of our ministry and understand that you're an integral and vital part in people's [worship] experiences…."[18] Most participants responded similarly. Bennett Stofer adds his church's philosophy of production as it relates to the congregation:

> We're called as a church to be together. And where it relates to music and singing, we are trying to facilitate an environment where you feel supported and confident enough to be able to sing out loudly and not feel like you're on your own, but also not so your attention is directed at everything happening on the stage whether it's visually or sonically. We're trying to support congregational engagement, whether it be singing or helping them focus on the sermon.[19]

Production ministry is integral to how the modern church practices corporate worship. The goal of the TA is to use technology as the means of helping focus the congregation's attention on participating in offering worship through song and hearing the Word and fellowship.

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[18] Manny interview.

[19] Stofer interview.

Production as Personal Worship

Separating the discussion of corporate and private worship is somewhat problematic

because, during the worship service, the volunteers' personal worship *is* focusing on their job for

the sake of corporate worship. Jeremy Oldja and Noah Felten's responses to Q19 and Q20 add

clarity to the discussion of the connection between personal worship and corporate worship:

> Oldja: Everyone ought to be worshipping. My production team ought to be worshipping, and you know what worship looks like?... It means sitting in the chair and doing your job well to support the overall picture of what's happening…my team ought to be fully engaged in worship, and that has nothing to do with how they feel about it. It has everything to do with why they are sitting down behind that computer or desk and doing that job and what they are putting into that. Their worship is their work.[20]

> Felten: I like to cast to the team that what we're doing is an act of worship. When you submit it as an act of worship you can really allow your heart to worship. Almost like in the Old Testament, when they raised a lamb, sleeping, feeding, taking care of it its whole life, just to kill it. All of that was actually an act of worship. It wasn't just the single day where they burned it up, but the whole thing was part of that process. If it's a button or a fader, or if it's getting the camera angle so that other people can see what's going on, it's an act of worship. It's a way that we can honor God with what he's given us, i.e., the lambs, and take care of it in an excellent way, so that we can give it as an offering. Here's what we've been given, [and we're giving it] back to God. I know that my attention to detail, focus on the next chord, the next line, is an act of worship.[21]

Whether or not production ministry is considered worship comes down to the heart attitude of

the TA. If they are not engaged in doing their job well because they want to be able to close their

eyes and lift their hands in worship, they are no longer serving the body of Christ well at that

moment.

Within corporate worship, there are two sides of personal worship as a volunteer serves

in their position: their role as servants within the body of Christ and their personal relationship

with and worship to God. As servants, the production team is a unique part of the body of Christ

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[20] Oldja interview.

[21] Felten interview.

that functions to help others worship.[22] Many technical directors mention that production can be a thankless role within the church, but also acknowledge that "This goes back to maturity. You have to have people who are at peace with that,"[23] and who are willing to keep serving joyfully because it is their calling, not because it earns them recognition. All Christians are called to spread the gospel message, so the production team "connect[s] people to the gospel through technology."

The other aspect of personal worship within the context of production is the TA's individual relationship with God. TAs offer their service to Christ's church as an act of personal worship, but they also need the life-changing power of the gospel message and the Holy Spirit. Sometimes this need is more significant than serving the body of Christ. Josh Moon, production director at Waymaker Church in Forest, VA, talked about how he encourages his team to put their relationship with the Lord before their service to the church: "What we do technically speaking is a form of worship because it's our sacrifice. It's our giving to the Lord and serving other people. That makes it an act of worship. Anything from sound to light to whatever we do, but more importantly, laying our position down and just going to spend time with the Father is more important to me."[24] In cases like these, the leader of the production team requires the Holy Spirit's help in discerning the needs of his team members. Sometimes, it is fitting to lay everything down for a collective moment in worship, but those moments must be led by the Spirit instead of human understanding and emotion.

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[22] Felten interview.

[23] Stofer interview.

[24] Moon interview.

**Desired Roles and Responsibilities of Production Team Volunteers**

As discussed in the introduction, the four main areas listed in the research questions have

been gathered throughout the literature review as the most commonly discussed areas of

expertise regularly required of a production volunteer. These four areas are technical knowledge

and expertise, theological knowledge and application to their craft, relational connectivity and

skill, and artistic expression. Interview participants were asked three questions to explore what

additional roles or skillsets a volunteer serving under their supervision would ideally possess.

Most of their answers fell under the initial four categorizations, as discussed below. This is

significant because it indicates that the areas chosen to be addressed fit within what is currently

practiced in most churches. The three questions, and the participants' responses, are shown

below in Tables 13, 14, and 15. Table 13 shows the participants' answers to Q5, listing what

additional responsibilities are currently expected of the volunteer production teams. Table 14

shows the responses to Q6, listing other desired skill sets or qualities. Table 15 shows responses

to Q10, which asked about the areas where the technical directors would like to see their teams

grow.

**Table 13. Current expectations for additional roles and responsibilities**

| **Q5:** In addition to running sound, lighting, and/or video, are there any additional roles or responsibilities that you expect of your team? | |
| --- | --- |
| **Response** | **Frequency of Response** |
| The production team is involved in making disciples | 1 |
| Current member of the church | 1 |
| Affirm the faith statement of the church | 1 |
| Living a life that reflects Christ | 1 |
| Aware of the support role | 1 |
| Setup and tear down | 1 |

Given the open-endedness of Q5, it is interesting to note that only one technical director

listed technically related tasks (setup and tear down) as an additional responsibility of their

technical volunteers. Q5 addressed duties in addition to simply running production for services.

Q6 addressed responsibilities in addition to all technical responsibilities, although some technical

directors also listed technical obligations. Table 14 displays the results for Q6.

**Table 14. Other Areas of Skill/Expectations**

| Q6: The purpose of my project is to outline some of the different roles that volunteers fill in addition to their technical role in the church and how to best equip them for those roles. What other categories would you say a volunteer under you would be skilled in? | |
| --- | --- |
| **Response** | **Frequency of Response** |
| Socially adept | 1 |
| Part of a community within the church outside the production team | 1 |
| Flexibility (personally/attitude) | 1 |
| Flexibility (technically skilled enough to be flexible) | 2 |
| Organized | 1 |
| Artistic | 1 |
| Observant | 1 |
| Musical | 2 |
| Humble/Teachable/willing to learn | 2 |
| Focused/Present | 2 |
| Reliable | 1 |
| Technically adept | 1 |
| Strong logical skills | 1 |
| Good attitude | 1 |
| Aware of their impact on the worship service | 1 |
| Willing to serve | 1 |
| Striving towards congregational engagement through their area of service | 1 |

This part of the discussion also includes desired areas for growth because it addresses the

roles and responsibilities that technical directors would like their teams to focus on for the sake

of improvement. Table 15 shows their responses. Given the open-ended nature of the question,

which did not specify whether the question was addressing the volunteers' technical skillset or

not, only one of the three answers given has to do with production quality.

**Table 15. Desired Areas for Growth**

| Q10: Are there any areas where you would like to see your volunteers grow, and if so, what are they? |
| --- |

| Response | Frequency of Response |
|---|---|
| Consistent quality of production week-to-week | 1 |
| Flexible (personally) | 1 |
| Engagement in Christian community within the church outside the production team | 1 |

It is meaningful to the study to include what qualifications technical directors look for when selecting volunteers. When asked, "What is the current selection process for new volunteers to join your team?" (Q11), both technical directors that were asked said that expressed interest is the only initial requirement. Both directors emphasized that they try to find a position where a willing person can serve, even if they are not the most skilled or experienced.

The answers to Q11 and the responses to the questions listed in Tables 13, 14, and 15 can generally be categorized into the four areas initially chosen to be examined. Table 16 shows that technical directors believe a more significant responsibility can be expected of a production volunteer in addition to completing their production role successfully each Sunday. Some soft skills (i.e., organized, reliable, observant, etc.) could fall under multiple categories but have been placed in the area that seemed most applicable. These intangible elements are equally crucial to the more tangible tasks and skills needed to volunteer on a church production team.

**Table 16. Desired Areas of Expertise/Growth, Categorized**

| **Technical Expertise** |
|---|
| Setup and tear down |
| Flexibility (technically skilled enough to be flexible) |
| Technically adept |
| Strong logical skills |
| Consistent quality of production week-to-week |
| Organized |
| Focused/Present |
| **Relational connectivity and skills** |
| Aware of the support role |
| Socially adept |
| Flexibility (personally/attitude) |
| Humble/teachable/willing to learn |
| Good attitude |

| | |
|---|---|
| Observant | |
| Reliable | |
| **Theological application to craft** | |
| The production team is involved in making disciples | |
| Current member of the church | |
| Affirm the faith statement of the church | |
| Living a life that reflects Christ | |
| Part of a community within the church outside the production team | |
| Aware of their impact on the worship service | |
| Willing to serve | |
| **Artistic expression & Worship** | |
| Artistic | |
| Musical | |
| Striving towards congregational engagement through their area of service | |

The categorization of these answers lends validity to the research questions because the technical directors indicate that they do not limit the expectations placed on their team to technical expertise alone. When asked what they look for in potential volunteers, technical directors overwhelmingly answered that they accept anyone willing to serve and learn onto the production team. They are not looking for experts in production who can run a perfect service but instead for people who are willing to serve, possess a teachable spirit, and have the soft skills needed to relate to those with whom they will interact.

## Current and Ideal Training Practices

RQ2 seeks to discover ways churches can effectively equip their volunteer TAs to successfully fulfill their production team roles. In addition to the training practices from the surveys discussed previously, the interview participants were asked more specifically about their current training practices, things they would like to implement, and their ideal training techniques. These questions and their responses are listed below in Table 17. It should be noted that not all participants responded to every question. Some questions were combined or modified later in the interview process to increase the efficiency of the interviews.

**Table 17. Questions Regarding Training Practices**

| Questions Regarding Training Practices |
| --- |
| *Technical* |
| **Q8.** What support/training is offered to the production team staff and volunteers by the church? |
| **Q16.** Do you currently implement training of any kind with your volunteer team? If so, please describe. |
| **Q16.1** Have those training practices been successful? Why or why not? |
| **Q17.** As the technical lead, what do you think would be the most effective way to train them in their technical skills? |
| **Q39.** What are some ways that churches can effectively train their volunteer production team to increase their technical expertise and knowledge? |
| |
| *Theological* |
| **Q21.** How important is it for a volunteer member of the production team to be spiritually equipped to do ministry? |
| **Q21.1.** Does their current role on the production team demand that preparation of them? What do you currently do to equip and care for the production team spiritually? |
| **Q27.** What do you believe to be the most effective way to disciple and equip your volunteer team spiritually, week-to-week? |
| **Q27.1.** What are your current practices? |
| **Q27.2.** Do you believe they are effective? Why or why not? |
| **Q40.** What are some ways that churches can effectively train their volunteer production team to increase their fluency in theology and application to their craft? |
| |
| *Relational* |
| **Q34.** What do you think would be the most effective way to train the production team to communicate effectively? |
| **Q41.** What are some ways that churches can effectively train their volunteer production team to increase their relational skills and connections within the church? |
| |
| *Artistic* |
| **Q37.** What is your perspective on the artistic aspect of the role of the production team? |
| **Q42.** What are some ways that churches can effectively train their volunteer production team to utilize their artistic expression through production and to offer it as an act of worship to the Lord? |
| **Q52.** How do you cultivate artistry in people who are more technically/mechanically minded? |
| |
| *General* |
| **Q50.** What training methods have you implemented with your teams? Do you feel they do a good job of addressing every aspect of a technical artist? |

**Technical**

Current Training Practices

During interviews, it quickly became evident that training practices vary depending on

the scope of production, the local culture, and the style of worship service. For churches that

simulcast (sermon and/or music is live streamed from another location) or churches that are

portable (meet in buildings that require weekly setup and tear down), most training is completed

on Sunday mornings, and there are limited opportunities for additional outside training. All

technical directors who have participated in the interviews use on-the-job training during

onboarding as the foundation for and primary means of training their volunteers. A few said they

have been able to establish outside training sessions occasionally but found that the challenge of

regular outside training was that not all volunteers come consistently. Manny talks about the

struggle of midweek training with volunteers:

> It's hard to find a balance of having enough opportunities that you don't get such a huge
> number of people showing up where you can't really move the needle with any
> individuals, but if there aren't enough people, then you lose momentum. If you offer
> more opportunities, it is likely going to be the same two people that show up every time
> because they just love it…[25]

Training practices also depend heavily on the type of production and the position in

which a volunteer wishes to serve. For some positions, it is easier and more beneficial to train

during a worship service or rehearsal, while for others, it is better and more achievable to have

additional training time either in advance or in addition to service times. Moon talked about the

differences in training practices for various production positions.

> There are some positions that it's much easier to train on during services, like camera
> operators. If you don't do it during a service, you don't have anything to point the camera
> at, and it makes it hard to understand framing. For the audio technicians, we can multi-

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[25] Manny interview.

track record all of our services so that we have those tracks to play back through the sound system when the band is not there and so audio training can happen during the week, making sure that they understand how to do processing on each of the channels and build a mix that lines up with our goal for the way we want our worship team to sound on any given Sunday morning.[26]

Additionally, according to the survey results, volunteers prefer flexible training to accommodate different learning styles. In production, there are many different ways to learn (audio, visually, hands-on, etc.). For some volunteers and positions, explaining the science and theory behind production choices may be more beneficial. In contrast, for others, it may be more helpful to demonstrate how to complete the task and save the "why" for when they are comfortable in their position.

Noah Felten serves as the Worship Director for First Church in Hebron, IN, and talked about how training might differ depending on the local culture. He spoke highly of the hard-working farmers and mill workers in his area and acknowledged that adding volunteer responsibilities to their work weeks is not a reasonable expectation. He commented that "Balancing their knowledge and confidence is totally the strategy that always has to change and it's person to person."[27] His goal in designing how their sound and lighting systems work is to give the volunteers as minimal a learning curve as possible so they can enjoy running a successful Sunday service without the stress of feeling like there is too much to learn before they can do so. Felten uses automation heavily at his campus and offers more in-depth training based on interest and availability, usually in an informal, conversational setting.

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[26] Moon interview.

[27] Noah Felten, interview by author, Microsoft Teams meeting, Lynchburg, VA, August 24, 2022.

Ideal Training Practices

Participants were also asked what they thought would be the most effective way to train their teams in technical skills. Noah Felten and TD1 both talked about fostering excitement in their team: "If someone gets excited about something and wants to try it, why not?"[28] The volunteers who responded to the survey also said, "There is always room to learn more about the task each of us do. If [volunteers are] interested in other media functions, have training in those areas."[29] There is a balance, as Felten mentioned, between knowledge and confidence. Too much information initially can be overwhelming and instill fear of failure rather than confidence, whereas teaching more depth of knowledge over time can build excitement as volunteers can apply new knowledge to the things in which they are already confident in execution.

Another training method that multiple interview participants mentioned is taking advantage of equipment upgrades or changes to the building or infrastructure by inviting volunteers to be involved in the installation process. This allows hands-on practice and enables volunteers to see more of the technical setup and details than they may see on a typical Sunday morning. Bennett Stofer, Media Director at First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, FL, mentioned that he tries to make the most of getting new equipment to train his volunteers on the new gear and review the basics of audio engineering and sound theory.[30]

Throughout the interviews, multiple directors mentioned compiling or creating training videos using sources like MxU. One of the benefits of this is that it helps unify the training experience so that all volunteers who work in a particular position are given the same resources

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[28] Felten interview.

[29] Anonymous survey response.

[30] Stofer interview.

for understanding and executing their job. Additionally, it provides the technical director and staff team an easy way to offer training outside of Sundays that volunteers can complete on their own time. Lastly, it simplifies the technical training so that the team can focus on other things when they are together. Stofer asserts: "I want to make sure all of the philosophical and theological things come from me and our leadership as far as how we do things, but I don't need to recreate the wheel in how to teach someone how to use a compressor."[31]

Technical directors also mentioned that an efficient way for churches to invest in training their volunteer TAs is to invest in training their staff TAs, who can then pass on the information they have gained to their volunteer team. Jeremy Oldja serves as a global production specialist at Liberty Live Church in southeast Virginia and as production director for their Smithfield campus. In an interview, Oldja said, "I think the biggest thing that any church can do to build up their team on a technical basis is to build up the person that is leading the team…if you can get one person taught, then you have a multiplicative method."[32] He continued to mention his qualifications, educational experience, and support system at the church and how he can reinvest that knowledge and time into his volunteers. Rather than spending the money to send an entire volunteer team to a conference, not to mention the inconvenience for those volunteers who work full-time elsewhere, the church can send their staff technical director to the same conference and have them then impart that knowledge to their volunteer team. There are obvious benefits to sending an entire team to a conference. The volunteers would be able to hear everything directly for themselves, and there is much potential for building closer relationships among team members to spend time together. The downside of conference-style training is that the sessions

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[31] Stofer interview.

[32] Oldja interview.

are rarely specific to the practices of the church, so the benefit of the technical director passing along new information is that they can contextualize and tailor the concepts to the specifics of their church's equipment and space for their teams.

Overall, the consensus was that on-the-job training is the most common and easiest to implement with a team of volunteers. Extra training can be added if there is interest and availability, but the most efficient way to bolster the volunteer training is to invest in the team leaders' training. In an interview with Dr. Way, he highlighted the difficulty of more formal training documentation or manuals because "To be honest, most people didn't read them, and the ones who did were already your volunteers who were your rock stars anyway who probably didn't need them."[33] Way said he mitigates that problem by focusing on hands-on practical training within the scheduled rehearsal times and involving the volunteers in being part of the church, "Because we know if they were connected to the church, they are probably willing to give more to the ministry."[34]

**Theological**

Current Training Practices

Theological training and spiritual discipleship were the topics that the research participants talked about the most. The researcher specifically asked about the application of biblical knowledge and theology to the role of the TA, whether TAs were invited to disciple others as part of their role, and if the current practices for achieving those things were working. Although there were mixed responses from technical directors for more specifics regarding their

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[33] Josiah Way, interview by author, Microsoft Teams meeting, Lynchburg, VA, August 25, 2022.

[34] Way interview.

methods for fostering spiritual growth in their volunteers, most talked more about spiritual training than technical training. When asked whether there is an expectation for their volunteers to be spiritually equipped to do ministry, there was a range of answers from "there isn't, but there should be"[35] to "making disciples is step 1 of doing ministry…its purpose is to reach more people with the gospel."[36]

Felten mentioned several times throughout his interviews that his team's goal is to build relationships and talk with people outside the tech booth on Sunday mornings. According to Felten, "Being spiritually equipped is closer to being defined as 'purposed in making disciples.'"[37] The expectation is that the volunteers take the opportunities available to them in small group, at church and special events, and in their personal lives to tell others about the gospel. Felten says, "Making disciples is our battle cry. I want everyone on the team to be engaged in mentoring someone else towards Christ."[38] In addition to vision casting during rehearsals, Felten dedicates several of his weekly hours to one-on-one meetings, phone calls, and texts to his volunteers to ensure he is in contact with each of them regularly, available for conversations about spiritual things and prayer. He acknowledges that his team was becoming too big for him to keep up with discipling each of his volunteers individually, so he is working on new strategies for helping his team grow spiritually.

Most technical directors agree that it is important for their team members to take part in Christian community. For the production team, there is a unique challenge in this since their

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[35] Stofer interview.

[36] Felten interview.

[37] Felten interview.

[38] Felten interview.

Sunday morning responsibilities can somewhat restrict their ability to fellowship with other believers as part of the worship service. Thus, the most common response was that the volunteer TAs were highly encouraged to participate in a small group, whether that was with other production team volunteers or not. Oldja emphasized that volunteers "are church members first,"[39] and Stofer pointed out that "serving on the media team is one aspect of your life as a church member."[40] The spiritual growth of the volunteers is of more importance to the technical directors than technical excellence. Moon stated that he aims to "make sure that the people who join our team are not the same spiritually on the day they joined as they are a year later."[41] This theme was constant throughout all interviews.

Ideal Training Practices

Although some things are universal among all the technical directors, spiritual training and discipleship practices depends on the dynamic of the production volunteers. Stofer pointed out that, although there is an aspect of spiritual leadership to his role as technical director, he "should not be their primary avenue of discipleship. I am not the source or facilitator of their growth, but I should be directing and helping them get connected in the ways that our church already offers."[42] He also pointed out that his difficulty in requiring his team members to do a specific set of things to say that they are growing spiritually is that it can easily lead to legalism.

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[39] Oldja interview.

[40] Stofer interview.

[41] Moon interview.

[42] Stofer interview.

Another theme often discussed was quarterly gatherings with the worship and the production team to fellowship, give feedback for technical and spiritual growth and unify the team in community. Justin Manny is uniquely positioned as the production pastor for Summit Church because he oversees the technical directors for each campus of Summit Church. His perspective is a little broader since he was not directly involved in any specific team or campus but acts as the technical and spiritual guide for those on staff who directly interact with volunteers. Manny himself emphasized that technical directors need spiritual leadership if they are expected to lead their volunteers spiritually. He said:

> Spiritual leadership starts with the leader having a full understanding of theology, of what we're doing in context. If we don't have that and we're trying to help other people understand why this exists, it's going to be really hard, and we can't instill that into our teams of volunteers. To effectively do it, us [sic] as leaders have to have those conversations regularly, build bandwidth into our schedules to be able to have time to rest and look back at what [we've] done, how it went and why it went that way. We need to have spaces where we are not just going and doing, we need to have spaces to sit by ourselves and find ways where we can really center ourselves as leaders in what we believe and why we're doing what we do. That way, it can spill out.[43]

Spiritual growth is significant to all the technical directors, and one of the signs of spiritual growth is telling others about Christ. When asked if their volunteers were given the opportunity to mentor others or if that was expected of them, the answers were split evenly between "yes" and "no." Moon brought out an important aspect of discipleship and mentorship among volunteers who serve the church. He said, "Spiritual mentorship is based on the idea of community and pouring into one another. It is very important because it speaks to the idea of unity. If we have people on the team that are also able to spiritually pour into other people, it

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[43] Manny interview.

builds. The idea [is] that our church [would be] unified, that we all understand our common goals and values."[44]

Even though most participants agreed that the ability to mentor others spiritually should be a sign of a growing believer, they also added that it does not necessarily impact the volunteers' ability to do their jobs on Sunday mornings. This begs the question: what about non-believers? Many churches pay non-believers to run sound for them. There has been a debate about whether or not to allow non-Christians to participate as part of the worship team (musicians), but what about the production team? Technical directors were asked whether they would allow a non-believer to serve on the team or if they would pay someone to come in and run a service if necessary. Oldja responded:

> Functionally speaking, you can have people in every one of those [production] positions that do not know the Lord. Frankly, you can have a worship service that's staffed by all believers and people that are there volunteering, and you can have another worship service in the same room with the same equipment and have non-believing contractors that are professionals in their field and you can have a way better congregation[al] engagement.[45]

TD1 also pointed out that "Many people who think that they follow Jesus have discovered over a period of time that they don't when you look at the fruit of their life."[46] This outlook has allowed several technical directors to see growth in their volunteers over time as they have become convicted by the Spirit that their life does not show evidence of their salvation. It has also given the opportunity for witnessing and "being a meaningful expression of

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[44] Moon interview.

[45] Oldja interview.

[46] TD1 interview.

Jesus to people"[47] who may just want a way to get involved in production or who need to fulfill mandated community service hours and want to learn a new skill.[48] As with all things, there are two sides to this matter. Stofer said he prefers a less skilled volunteer fully invested in the church's mission over a professional who is just there for the paycheck.

**Relational**

Current Training Practices

In addition to the two questions listed under the "Relational" heading in Table 17, participants were also asked more specifically about different relationships that a production team volunteer would need to develop, including between themselves and other members of the volunteer team, pastors, and congregants. Technical directors generally agree that there should be good comradery between volunteers on the technical team. The difficulty in having a large enough team to be able to rotate fairly is that the team members who work the same position rarely see each other week to week (for example, there is generally only one person needed to run lyrics, so the people who run lyrics are never scheduled for the same Sunday). Way agrees with this but emphasizes the importance of developing this community outside of service times. When the volunteers are actively engaged in producing the worship service, they do not necessarily need to know details about the person next to them. However, they need a good level of communication, which community always helps with. Way states, "Leading up to the moment is what has the biggest impact. Are you a cohesive team during the week so that when you show up on Sunday, it's just second nature? It's about the pre-connection, making sure people feel

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[47] TD1 interview.

[48] Both of those situations were mentioned specifically in two of the interviews.

valued and connected to the larger purpose of the church so that on Sunday, they're just autopiloting."[49] The other technical directors value a good connection among their team members because it tends to make their service together more enjoyable and edifying.

When asked how the volunteer TA should relate to the pastor, most technical directors answered that the volunteer does not need to communicate about technical things with the pastor because that is the role of the technical director in most cases. Outside of their duties as volunteers, they should have access to the pastor to discuss personal and spiritual matters as any other congregation member would. However, on a Sunday morning, when it is time for the service or sound check, most technical directors said they serve as an intermediary between the pastoral staff and the production team. Participants were also asked whether it was important for volunteers to be able to communicate effectively with someone who was not technically inclined. Moon responded that it was important to him because sometimes congregants approach volunteers with complaints or the pastor asks for something that is not possible in the moment, and the volunteer has to be able to make their reasoning accessible to other people who do not know as much about the technological or other limitations.

The last relationship discussed was that of the volunteer to the congregation, whether actively in their volunteer role or as a church member. As church members, volunteer TAs are no different from the rest of the congregation in that they should be part of a small group and build relationships as part of their surrounding Christian community. In general, technical directors do not believe that the volunteer's spiritual maturity or level of connectedness affects how the congregation perceives the worship service from a production point of view.

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[49] Way interview.

Ideal Training Practices

Relationality and communication skills are soft skills. They are more challenging to train,

and the variables of personality, team culture, and leadership style, among others, all play a role

in how a team relates to each other. However, there are certain relationships within the church

that the production team should nurture for the sake of the team's performance. Manny listed the

other people within the church that he thought his volunteer team should ideally be comfortable

communicating with and taking criticism from. These include:

- Tech/worship band relationship (especially during soundcheck and troubleshooting)

- Guest services

- Church elders

- Pastors

- Worship leaders

If not handled with grace and teachability, each of these relationships can make

completing the task of facilitating a worship service more difficult. Manny also acknowledged:

> Most of the time, if we're being really honest, production people want to be in the
> background, they don't really want to be seen. They're not necessarily the most outgoing
> people, some of them are but not all of them. So, we try to cue some other people
> pastorally to come and try to help deepen those relationships. There are some things that I
> could easily go get the answer to myself, but that doesn't help our teams grow. It helps
> get that one answer, but it doesn't help the relational equity, so I'm going to push them to
> go outside their comfort zone, go find and talk to the person they need to talk to.[50]

Moon responded similarly, explaining that he cannot be present in all places at once, so there

will be times when volunteers will need to respond to a question or troubleshoot an issue and be

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[50] Manny interview.

able to communicate what they are thinking.[51] Interestingly, a few technical directors do not think it is necessarily crucial for their team to invest in those relationships because the technical director's presence makes it unnecessary.

Ultimately, the goal for building good team comradery as Christians is to build each other up in the Word and serve the body of Christ together. Team unity demonstrates Christ's call to be of the same spirit and mind, and in the context of production, the byproduct of unity in Christ is that "the closer the team is, the more refined what we do will naturally become."[52]

**Artistic**

Current Training Practices

Audio/visual production is two-sided; it is both a science and an art. Technical directors were asked if their team has the freedom to produce to their artistic taste and what their view of the creative aspect of their production team is. Many responded to the first question with similar answers. They have given their volunteers boundaries within a set of standards, such as peak levels, lighting practices, and fonts or backgrounds for lyrics, but the volunteers have freedom within those parameters to produce as they see fit. For some, the freedom to make mistakes was very important. Through mistakes, volunteers learn by experience what works and what does not, and which boundaries are okay to push. Oldja said that he allows the congregation to dictate the boundaries of his teams' artistic expression, meaning that church culture plays an important role in setting those guidelines. One of the goals of the production team is to engage the congregation. Artistry is a tool with which volunteers can engage the congregation, but it has to

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[51] Moon interview.

[52] Stofer interview.

be done within the bounds of the church culture and preferences. Oldja expressed this challenge

of being an artist in production ministry with a more traditional approach in mind: "I can't lead

people if they can't see me. If I am so far down the [artistic] path that there is no

connection…I'm not helpful because I'm so far away. I've got to meet them where they're at,

hold their hand, and take them there."[53] Oldja passionately talked about this concept because he

believes that production ministry is more than simply making the music and sermon accessible in

a manner that eliminates distraction. It goes beyond the baseline of a distraction-free

environment to creating a dynamically engaging environment for worship with a balance of art,

technical precision, and spirit-led but focused leadership.

Ideal Training Practices

When asked about how churches can effectively train their volunteer production team to

utilize their artistic expression through production, multiple participants mentioned the

importance of continuing to draw inspiration from leaders in the worship industry, other

churches, and the secular production community. Without that input, "It's easy to get in an

artistic rut and just do things the same way. Things can get stale."[54] Manny also talked about the

value of allowing younger volunteers to push the limits (within boundaries) and keeping older

volunteers flexible rather than complacent in how things have always been done. He said, "The

ways that I interact with the world are different from the way that a 22-year-old interacts with the

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[53] Oldja interview.

[54] Stofer interview.

world, so I need someone younger than me to help reach the next generation, and I would rather do that and sacrifice some of my preferences."[55]

Production ministry can easily appeal to both artistic and technically minded people. More than ever, the science of church production is a computer and networking science. Those who are more mechanically minded or skilled in networking and computer science can offer a lot to churches as technology continues to become more refined. Those with a musical or artistic background and who enjoy production for the finished product's artistry can help inspire and push those who are not as naturally expressive, and vice versa. The challenge for technical directors is to know their team members well enough to train both sides. Mentorship and collaboration between volunteers can be helpful tools for the team leader to use their volunteers' giftings to their full potential while pushing them out of their comfort zones.

## Conclusion

In Chapter IV, the researcher presented the data collected through six interviews with technical directors and worship pastors and 26 anonymous survey responses from church technical directors, worship pastors, and volunteer TAs. The researcher reported on the demographics of those who participated in the survey, including years of experience in church production ministry, position held, church size, and some experiential factors.

The level of importance that those actively involved in church production ministry assigned to several factors in the facilitation of corporate worship was collected and reported (RQ1). Four categories were chosen for research, and the survey questions corresponded to one or more of the four – technical training, theological application, relational skills, and artistry.

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[55] Manny interview.

Levels of importance were gathered through Likert scale questions, and the level of importance was analyzed by finding the mean value assigned by survey respondents. The responses from volunteers and team leaders were reported separately, and both results were presented side by side to see if the two groups had differing opinions. Also included in the survey were three open-ended questions to help gather qualitative data from volunteers who responded to the survey.

RQ2 explored the current and ideal training practices that production team leaders and volunteers have used or wish to establish. The results from the interviews and open-ended survey questions were reported to understand better why some training methods have worked well and why others have not. The data from both RQ1 and RQ2 are discussed further in Chapter V: Discussion.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the importance of volunteer training in a church's production ministry and evaluate the effectiveness of current training practices to find ways that churches can effectively train their volunteer team holistically. Six church technical directors were interviewed and 26 technical directors, worship pastors, and volunteer TAs were surveyed to collect data to find the level of importance that those groups would assign to different aspects of a volunteer's training in worship ministry (RQ1) and to assess the effectiveness of their current training practices (RQ2). The levels of importance were measured using five-point Likert scale questions, which were presented to participants of both the interviews and the surveys. The data collected were used to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How important to the successful facilitation of corporate worship is it to train the volunteer production team in areas related to technical expertise, theology, relational connectivity and skill, and artistic expression?

RQ2: What are some of the ways churches can effectively train their volunteer production team to increase their technical expertise and knowledge, fluency in theology, relational skills, and artistic expression?

Participants were church technical directors, volunteer TAs, and worship pastors who oversee production volunteers. They were required to have five or more years of experience in church production ministry and be currently involved in their church's production team. The researcher structured the interviews to be able to gather as great a breadth of information from each participant as possible and included Likert scale questions and open-ended discussion regarding their production philosophy and theological foundation, training practices, and

personal experience. The survey was constructed in three parts: Part 1 collected demographic data of the participants and some experiential multiple-choice style questions, Part 2 used a Likert scale for participants' responses on their perceptions regarding the level of importance of aspects of volunteer training in worship ministry, and Part 3 presented open-ended questions which allowed participants to share their experiences and knowledge. The interviews were sufficient to gather information from technical directors and the survey was added later in the research process as a tool to reach production volunteers since their contact information is not as readily available as those of church staff production or worship leaders.

### Research Question 1

"How important to the successful facilitation of corporate worship is it to train the volunteer production team in areas related to technical expertise, theology, relational connectivity and skill, and artistic expression?" In investigating the importance of volunteer training, RQ1 assessed the levels of importance in four different areas of training: technical skills, theological application, relational skills, and artistry. A summary of the overall importance of each area is shown in Table 18.

**Table 18. Overall Importance of Volunteer Training in Worship Ministry**

| Area | Overall Importance (Median) |
|---|---|
| Technical | 4 |
| Theological | 5 |
| Relational | 5 |
| Artistic | 1.5 |

Twenty-nine participants answered questions related to each of the four categories above. Overall, participants viewed training in the first three areas as important. The median score for technical training was closest to the "important" rating (4) on the Likert scale. The median score

for theological and relational training was closest to the "very important" rating (5) on the Likert scale. The median score for artistic training was between "not important at all" and "somewhat unimportant" rating (1.5) on the Likert scale. The scope of questions asked about artistry on the survey was much smaller (1), so the results were limited. However, with the corresponding interview responses, the numerical representation of the importance of artistic training is representative. Most technical directors believe that artistry is important but is secondary to the theological foundation and practical function of the job of the volunteer TA. The results for each category examined are conclusive since they fall distinctly on either side of the "neutral" rating (3) on the Likert scale.

Of the resources reviewed in Chapter II, many focused on the different roles that TAs play in worship ministry, and some offered training resources for those who serve on church production teams. Many of the books, technical guides, and articles also had either a spiritual, relational, or artistic element. The importance of the current study lies in the data gathered from the volunteers and team leaders that have participated in the study. Although many resources offer the technical director's perspective, and some offer the volunteer perspective, at least through the hindsight of their authors, knowing both volunteer and leader's perspectives concurrently could help to determine if there is a difference between what team leaders view as important and what their teams view as important. Evaluating both perspectives within a team can help leaders determine whether the volunteers are receiving and understanding the vision, theological basis, and technical training in the way it is intended.

Volunteers who participated in this study generally tend to agree with the technical directors and worship pastors that participated on the importance of many different items in the successful facilitation of a worship service. There were some notable differences, however. As

mentioned in Chapter IV, the majority of technical team leaders think it is more important for volunteers to experience Christian community outside their volunteer team than within the team, while volunteers think the opposite. Additionally, volunteers feel it is important for them to know how to communicate technical needs to those who are not technically inclined, while team leaders do not think it is as important for volunteers to have that skill. The differences in responses show a disparity between what volunteers and their team leaders either prefer or perceive to be true. Is this contrast simply due to the different roles of the two positions (volunteer vs. team leader), or does the variation in perception indicate a communication divide between team leaders and their volunteers?

Perhaps of more significance is the disparity in the depth of responses to the open-ended questions between volunteers and team leaders, particularly regarding the scriptural basis for technical arts and technical arts as a form of worship. This could be due to several factors. For instance, technical team leaders may have completed the survey as part of their regular paid hours, whereas volunteers would have filled out the survey on their personal time. Hence, volunteer responses tended to be briefer and less detailed than their team leaders' answers. The lack of direct scriptural citations from volunteers could also reveal a gap in volunteer training.

Although all technical directors indicated that their role does demand spiritual leadership from them, some specify that they are not supposed to be their volunteers' main source of spiritual mentorship. Others talk about how they are specifically making time in their own schedules to dedicate more time to the spiritual development of their team because they feel that is more important than technical excellence. While the team leaders have thought through the biblical basis for why and how they do their craft, they may have yet to successfully lead their volunteers to the same understanding of the scriptural foundations. There is a common theme

among all responses that the technical arts are a tool to help spread the gospel, although no direct references to Scripture have been paired with this response.

The data presented in Chapter IV: Results show that the answer to RQ1 is that volunteer training in the areas of technical expertise, theological application, and relational skills is important to the successful facilitation of a worship service, while training in artistry is unimportant (1.5). Based on the data from RQ1, RQ2 explored those areas which have been found to be most important and discussed the training methods most churches choose to use and what they have found to be effective.

### Research Question 2

"What are some of the ways churches can effectively train their volunteer production team to increase their technical expertise and knowledge, fluency in theology, relational skills, and artistic expression?" Most data for RQ2 was gathered through interviews with technical directors. Volunteer responses were gathered through the survey as well. While all churches view and operate their production ministry differently, three volunteer responses stood out as significant to the rest of the findings. These three answers were distinct from any answer given by technical directors or worship pastors, although the idea of mentorship was mentioned briefly in a few interviews with directors:

1. Mentorship between older and younger volunteers (both spiritual and technical),

2. Training based on volunteer interest, and

3. Training tailored to different learning styles.

Stofer talked about the unique multi-generational aspect of his team, and that mentorship is a great way to utilize the knowledge and experience of volunteers that have served for over 20

years in some cases.[1] Felten also spoke to how mentorship can go the other way—while older and more experienced volunteers have life experience, younger volunteers can help others on the team stay up to date with new technology, musical and production styles, and creativity.[2]

While most church technical directors are not education specialists, the idea of training tailored to learning styles is new to the researcher and significant enough to consider. However, *how* to establish training practices that can accommodate multiple learning styles is beyond the scope of this study. Training on production teams could easily be tailored to volunteer interests. Based on an expressed interest, technical directors can concentrate their training efforts to fit with what the volunteers want to learn next, whether they want to gain experience in a different production position or learn more details about the tasks they are comfortable executing.

<div align="center">Technical</div>

Throughout the interviews with technical directors, it became clear that their interest in discussing training methods leans heavily toward the theological background and relationship building rather than the specifics of detailed training programs. Even for technical training, their answers were generally very relationally based, which was not expected by the researcher. The initial concept of this project was to build a curriculum for the effective training of volunteer TAs, but that goal changed prior to starting the research itself because the researcher thought it more important to see if volunteers had input on the topic of their own training. Although the researcher did not have the opportunity interview any volunteers (all interviews were with those who lead volunteers), the survey responses regarding training practices mirrored the relationality

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[1] Stofer interview.

[2] Felten interview.

of the technical directors' responses in interviews. Some specifics were mentioned, as discussed in Chapter IV, but for the most part, those specifics seem to be based on the individual volunteer, interest, team dynamic, and local and church culture. This means that creating a training program is more complex than simply building a one-size-fits-all curriculum. Instead, it places the burden of designing and tailoring team-specific training on the technical director, requiring them to have a more diverse set of skills that could include:

- Technical knowledge and skill

- Ability to teach (including, but not limited to: communicating concepts, possibly in multiple ways to multiple types of learning styles, personalities, technical backgrounds and levels of experience, etc.)

- Ability to use outside resources to their advantage while explaining to their team how the concepts apply to their specific setting

- Team organization and leadership

- Ongoing personal development (technical, leadership, spiritual, etc.)

- Relationship-building

- Empowering others and instilling confidence

Like most leadership roles, the technical director must be a team leader, teacher, coach, caretaker, and much more. Oldja's statement about investing in the team leader applies to more than just their technical training. It should extend to all areas of leadership development.

## Theological

Theological training was the topic that technical directors were particularly enthusiastic to discuss during interviews. Although most agree that this was an important aspect of their volunteers' training, many do not feel that their current practices accomplish this goal. There is

evidence that churches are moving in the direction of focusing more on spiritual growth than on a high level of production, as seen in C1's recent shift in production values, which can only benefit those who serve on the production team. While serving in church production may be part of their unique gifts and calling, their true purpose is to make disciples and that can only happen through spiritual growth and relationships. How technical directors choose to foster spiritual growth and discipleship amongst their team, again, should be dependent on their team's current spiritual maturity, culture, and pastoral leadership. Although counterintuitive when discussing training for TAs, church leaders and technical directors must remember that their TAs are first people who need a Savior and who are called to share Him with others. When churches choose to use production as a tool to reach more people (as an attractional tool), they run the risk of losing their production team's foundational purpose of making disciples.[3] The production team can easily be trained to fulfill their role either way, so it is up to the church leadership to create a culture that reflects true, Christ-mirroring discipleship for their volunteers.

<div align="center">Relational</div>

The relational aspect of the TA's role was more difficult to talk about, simply because it is made up of soft skills that are generally learned over time and through observation rather than training programs. However, it was the main theme throughout all discussions, even down to the volunteers' responses for how they would prefer to receive technical training – through

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[3] This idea is drawn from TD1's interview and supported by *The Prodigal Church: A Gentle Manifesto Against the Status Quo*, written by Jaren C. Wilson. This book boldly questions the ideology behind how churches operate. Consumerism is a main theme of Wilson's discussion, and while he does not directly challenge production in and of itself, he echoes the concept of Marshall McLuhan's fourth Law of Media discussed in Chapter II of this study (The fourth law theorizes that all forms of media, however useful, reverse in on themselves when pushed to their limits). The attractional church, or even the average church that attempts to cater to the various desires and preferences of their congregants, tend to end up in a competition to meet "consumer" needs rather than having true, Scriptural practices.

mentorship, based on questions, and specific to their needs as a person. Relationality reached beyond the scope of the questions the researcher asked about team building or Christian community and was a part of all discussions about technical, theological, and artistic training. Technical directors and volunteers alike talked about the importance of mentorship, discipleship, and their call to share the gospel with others, with the practical/technical aspect coming second in priority.

Artistic

Artistry, like relationality, is difficult to train. However, it can be done through building a foundation of good technique and drawing inspiration from other churches, recordings, industry practices, and multi-generational preferences. The true artistry of production in the church comes from the Spirit of God, who empowers those gifted in technical arts to practice their art in such a way that it brings glory to God. Artistry can be expressed in a way that brings glory to the artist or in a way that brings glory to the Creator, and church production is no exception. The true task of training a volunteer TA in their artistry is more about training them to worship rightly than about the art itself, although there are practical techniques that can be taught that lend more creative expression. Like Bezalel, God has empowered TAs with the aptitude for the art, but He also fills them with the Spirit to practice the art in a way that can glorify Himself. Because of the Holy Spirit's indwelling of all who believe and follow Christ, anyone who is saved is filled with the Spirit for the glorification of the Son (John 16:14). This applies in all facets of life, including volunteering as a TA.

**Implications**

Even in discussing how to train TAs for their role in worship ministry, there is a tension between producing to attract man's attention and producing for the glorification of God. Art

should effectively function to point the congregation's attention to God while reflecting His beauty. The tension lies in how the culture of church production has grown to be a tool for attracting people to church rather than to the gospel, not that the two must be mutually exclusive, but the question of how the congregation or new visitors perceive this must be considered. Does the production team realize that their role is more than simply facilitating the worship service in an engaging and distraction-free way and that they too are called to make disciples? While most technical directors' responses reflect that they understand this is part of their team's role, many acknowledged that their team was not functioning in a way that reflected that understanding. Volunteer responses indicate that they are not necessarily trained to think about their role in that way, at least not to the depth that the technical directors hope to achieve.

<div align="center">A Note on "Worship"</div>

As noted in Chapter IV, there was a wide range of implied definitions of the word "worship," which indicates that not all technical directors, worship pastors, and volunteers have the same understanding of how a TA's role fits in worship ministry. For many, "worship" refers to the act of singing worship songs, which leads to the obvious conclusion that serving in production ministry hinders one's ability to participate in worship. For others, "worship" and service are independent of each other, meaning that the volunteer's service to the congregation is not considered an act of worship. Neither of these are biblically accurate concepts, and although most would not likely define "worship" with either of those definitions, the language that the church uses surrounding the practice of worship can be confusing when discussing a person's role in worship ministry. In the words of A.W. Tozer, "A worshipper can work with eternal quality in his work. But a worker who does not worship is only piling up wood, hay and stubble

for the time when God sets the world on fire (see 1 Corinthians 3:10–15)."[4] Church technical arts

are not usually spoken about in such stark terms, but it is critical to consider how the team goes

about serving and producing if the manner in which church production is practiced does indeed

influence the congregation's view of God and how He is to be worshiped. It has been said by

many that worship is a lifestyle, and true worship involves wonder in Who God is, obedience to

His calling to bear witness about Him, and actions that follow faith.[5] Church technical arts may

not seem that consequential at first glance, but in a world that relies on technology so heavily,

church TAs must be theologians of their craft so that they may lead the congregation in placing

technology in its correct place in the worship of God.

### Possible Limitations

Generalization of the results of the current study to the larger population should be

considered with caution due to the sample size (6 interviewees and 26 survey participants).

Survey distribution relied on technical directors distributing the link to their teams and so the

number of participants who are volunteers at their churches was limited. It was also difficult to

calculate response rate for the survey. Although the researcher requested that technical directors

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[4] A.W. Tozer, *Whatever Happened to Worship? A Call to True Worship* (Chicago: Wingspread Publishers, revised edition, 2012), 12.

1 Corinthians 3:10–15: "According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each on take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire."

[5] Warren W. Wiersbe, *Real Worship: Playground, Battle Ground, or Holy Ground?* 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000). See also, James 2:14–18.

report how many people they sent the survey to, only a few responded, and the survey may have been shared further by those that received the link from their technical directors.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study, the researcher recommends continued conversations and evaluation regarding the function of production in worship ministry. Further exploration of the theology of technical arts is needed, especially to establish a more current practical theology that considers the world of technology, social media, media consumption, and the gospel. Churches should be proactive in correctly defining worship and adjusting how they speak and practice in ways that reflect that definition to their leadership, volunteers, and congregants. Church leaders who have studied worship and theology should make efforts towards training those who lead in other areas of ministry in the same. This could include more focus on theology and praxis in any quarterly gatherings of the production and worship teams or focused training sessions or Bible studies specifically for the training of the production team. Churches should also equip their technical directors and production leadership to be able to train their team both technically and spiritually so that a theology of production becomes part of the team's culture rather than a supplemental idea to add on to current practices. Additionally, churches could implement discipleship and mentorship structures within their teams so that volunteers can begin practicing that part of their calling with each other and better prepare for ministry outside the team.

Further study surrounding all these topics should be pursued, both academically and by those actively serving in production ministry. The current study categorized training into four areas: technical, theological, relational, and artistic. While this separation may have been cumbersome at times, it has helped to reveal what aspects of the volunteers' role are most

important to those who have participated in the study. Further exploration of these categories could be expanded to include other areas of training or apply them in different ways.

## Suggestions for Further Study

The present data shows that, according to TAs and team leaders, volunteer training in the areas of technical expertise, theological application, and relational skills is important in facilitating a worship service, whereas artistry was not perceived to be as important. Although this is the answer that the present data brings to this question, there are further questions to answer. Some of these questions are what are other areas of volunteer training that impact the worship service? Is there a difference in the impact of those areas of volunteer training in churches of larger production scope than those with smaller production scope? Do the differences in volunteer and team leader perspectives indicate a gap in volunteer training and preparedness or something else?

Future research could expand the scope of the current study to include more participants to make the sample size appropriate for generalization to the larger population of churches in the United States. The focus of the study could be shifted more heavily towards volunteer input or be designed to link volunteer and technical director's responses directly to determine the correlation between how leaders intend to train their teams and their team's understanding of their training. The results of the open-ended questions have revealed a disparity in the responses of volunteers and their team leaders when asked about certain theological aspects of their role in church ministry. Further research is needed to determine if these differences are simply due to the time the participating individuals had to dedicate to responding to the survey questions or if it is due to a lack of training in those areas. It could also indicate whether technical team leaders,

specifically technical directors, view themselves as spiritual leaders of their volunteers or simply functional administrative leaders.

Additionally, the study could be narrowed to be a case study of a single church, churches in a certain geographical area, churches of a certain size or production scope, etc., to see how those factors impact how churches choose to train their volunteers and whether effective practices are universal or specific to certain cultural contexts. A study could be done that implements changes in theological training and the results of the impact on worship ministry could be analyzed over time. It would also be interesting to explore the long-term effects of frequency of volunteer training versus depth of volunteer training (either technical or theological or both).

Perhaps most relevant to today's church would be a study focused on churches that have recently scaled back their production scope to focus on discipleship and ministry training and the effects of this shift on the congregational and volunteers' understanding and practice of worship. This could also include the implementation of discipleship training for volunteers on the production team to see if their mindset towards production changes over time and whether that would have an effect on production quality and congregational perception.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to investigate the importance of different aspects of a volunteer TA's role in worship ministry and explore effective training practices. The data collected were used to answer the following research questions:

1.  How important to the successful facilitation of corporate worship is it to train the volunteer production team in areas related to technical expertise, theology, relational skills, and artistic expression?

2. What are some of the ways churches can effectively train their volunteer production team to increase their technical expertise and knowledge, fluency in theology, relational skills, and artistic expression?

Results from interviews and surveys were analyzed to determine how important technical directors and volunteers viewed different aspects of their role to be in worship ministry, as well as the effectiveness of current training practices. Participants generally viewed technical, theological, and relational areas to be most important in worship ministry, while artistry was less important. Participants also indicated that, while some current training practices were very effective for their teams, there were other areas where they would like to improve or update their training. Although the study revealed that all participants viewed the theological aspect of the role to be important, the overall understanding of "worship" and the scriptural basis for technical arts in worship was not as consistent among all participants. The researcher concluded that if further training were to be prioritized, a theology of technical arts and church production would be the most needed among those who participated. While some technical directors and volunteers had a scripturally accurate understanding, others were inconsistent in their responses, or there were inconsistencies between the responses of technical directors and of the volunteers that served under them. Theological training would help to unify team vision, edify those who serve as TAs, and increase a church-wide understanding of worship. Technical arts will most likely be ever present in the future of the church, so establishing this foundation is crucial to the health and worship of churches moving forward.

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