AN ANALYSIS OF THE NEED FOR A CONGREGATIONAL
SONGWRITING MANUAL FOR THE EVANGELICAL COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF THE NEED FOR A CONGREGATIONAL SONGWRITING MANUAL FOR THE EVANGELICAL COMMUNITY

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Mentor: Dr. Vernon M. Whaley

Music has always been an essential part of the faith journey of God’s people. The modern worship movement over the past twenty years has created an industry for new songs of worship. In conjunction with advances in technology, more than ever, songwriters have been able to easily create well-produced compositions. It is the author’s opinion that with the massive influx of music, the craft of well-composed, singable tunes matched with theologically accurate lyrics has been largely neglected. There is a need for an academic songwriting manual, teaching students and worship leaders how to write congregational songs for the evangelical church.

Through interviewing and collecting songwriting wisdom from well-known, current praise and worship songwriters, educators, pastors and producers, this thesis defends the need for a songwriting manual that explains how to craft lyrics and melodies that serve the evangelical church and provide students with exercises and assignments to craft their skill. Such a text responds to the specific need to train songwriters in crafting songs for the evangelical church. Abstract length: 168 words.
Dedicated to my parents, Reginald Edward Joseph Doucette and Elizabeth Anne Doucette, who gave me life, introduced me to Jesus Christ and the wonderful world of music.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NIV – New International Version
CMI – Christian Music Industry
MP – Marketplace
CCM – Contemporary Christian Music
Exod. – Exodus
Chron. – Chronicles
Zeph. – Zephaniah
Col. – Colossians
Eph. – Ephesians
Ps. – Psalm
Chapter One - Introduction

Throughout the Scriptures music has been irrevocably part of the faith journey of God’s people. Songs of worship have accompanied some of the most dynamic events in Scripture including the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 15:1-21), the dedication of Solomon’s temple (2 Chron. 5:13) and even the creation of the universe (Job 38:7). The Bible teaches that even God Himself rejoices over His people with singing (Zeph. 3:17).

Tom Olson, campus pastor at the Orchard evangelical Free Church in Illinois lists a number of biblical reasons why singing matters: when the church sings, “we obey” and “dig deep roots in the Word” (Col. 3:16), “build others up” (Eph. 5:19), and “walk a God-designed pathway to joy” (Ps. 5:11).¹

Over the course of history God has gifted men and women with the ability to compose songs of praise and worship that help God’s people articulate their worship unto Him. Many times when God moves in the course of history new songs are birthed as an expression of what God is doing in the lives of His people. Elmer Towns and Vernon Whaley state:

Through the centuries, there have been periods of great encounter with God. We often call these periods revivals or Great Awakenings. During these periods of awakening, new music, methods, styles, processes, and techniques of worship emerge. Sometimes God’s people emerge from awakenings expressing their love for him in completely new ways. Through awakenings, lives are always changed, communities are transformed, families are restored, and people turn from wickedness to righteousness.²

God’s work continues today and, as the Spirit moves, new songs of worship continue to be birthed in the hearts of His children.

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The topic of songwriting has become relevant to ministry for a number of reasons. First, God has been moving in the hearts of His people. God continues to give songs as fresh expressions of what He is doing in the lives of His people for the purpose of ministering and building the faith of His church. Second, songs teach. The songs sung in church tell believers what to think about God and how the church should respond to Him. Theologian Gordon Fee states, “Show me a church’s songs and I’ll show you their theology.” Third, the praise and worship movement has created a culture and consumer-based industry that is constantly in need of new song. Because of these reasons, there is an important need to teach and train songwriters to develop and hone their craft in a way that will serve the local church and bring glory to Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this thesis is to argue the need for a congregational songwriting manual for the evangelical church. Investigation profits the academic and ecclesiastical communities by documenting need for pedagogical resources in the teaching of songwriting. Perhaps research will lead to the creation of an academic textbook that could be used as a curriculum to teach and train songwriters how to write effective songs that serve and bless the evangelical community.

Statement of the Problem

Through the years, a substantial amount of articles, trade books and other resources have been published on the topic of songwriting, both sacred and secular. As far as this author is aware, there is yet to be a one-volume comprehensive, directed, academic manual and curriculum specifically for writing worship songs. The evangelical community needs an academic songwriting manual that teaches students how to write and craft songs for corporate worship. Most currently available resources for songwriting are deficient in one of five areas:

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i) They are exclusively focused on writing songs for the commercial pop-music market.\(^4\)

ii) They are not written as a pedagogical tool suitable for the academic audience.

iii) They are not written exclusively for an evangelical audience.

iv) They neglect some of the additional considerations needed when writing corporate congregational worship songs (range/setting, limitations on poetic expressions, rhythmic complexity).

v) They are very pragmatic in their approach frequently downplaying or giving little emphasis to the organic nature of songwriting, especially in the context of partnership and development of a songwriting culture/community within a church context. Additionally, they neglect a strong emphasis on the relationship between congregational songwriting and “local theology.”

This thesis is an analysis of currently available songwriting materials combined with strategic interviews with professionals in the church, academia and Christian Music Industry. The analysis will demonstrate for the need for a congregational songwriting manual for the evangelical church that is unique to any other currently available resource.

Organization of Thesis

Chapter one provides an overview of the thesis study. It sets parameters for the purpose, organization, and limitations of the study and concludes with brief biographies of those interviewed in the study.

The second chapter provides a more detailed look at the available resources in the areas of songwriting. An inventory of currently available resources include books published in the last twenty years. Strengths and weaknesses of existing books, dissertations, theses and journals demonstrate the need for further research in various songwriting disciplines.

Chapter three articulates five key areas about songwriting in the Bible from which a theological and ministerial rationale is shaped. More specifically, by researching and investigating the concept of “local theology,” and demonstrating how it relates to congregational

\(^4\) Although worship music implements principles relating to pop music, it seems issues such as theology are inadequately explored in many available resources on the market. For instance, in Robert Sterling’s text, “The Craft of Christian Songwriting” (Hal Leonard, 2009) only three sentences are given on the importance of theology in crafting Christian songs.
songwriting, a rationale and justification for a songwriting manual strategic to the evangelical community is established.

Chapter four presents data based on interviews with five pastors. Each pastor was asked a series of questions designed to reveal the current songwriting needs in evangelical churches throughout North America. By evaluating the songwriting needs of the church according to a pastor, a clearer sense of what needs to be included in a congregational songwriting manual can be obtained.

Chapter five presents data based on interviews with four educators. Each professor was asked a series of questions designed to reveal the current songwriting needs in evangelical academia. Through these strategic interviews, curriculum-based needs can be revealed and addressed.

Chapter six presents data based on interviews with four songwriters and four producers. Each songwriter or producer was asked a series of questions designed to reveal the current songwriting needs in the evangelical Christian Music Industry and Marketplace. By investigating the needs within the Christian Music Industry and Marketplace, songwriting pedagogy can be established that addresses the ongoing demands of the Christian music business.

Finally chapter seven provides an overview summary of the thesis and details needed content for a congregational songwriting manual.

*Statement of Limitations and Delimitations*

One limitation is the special consideration given to researching songwriting books currently in print and popular over the past twenty years.

Delimitations include: First, the research has been conducted within and is designed for the evangelical community. The National Association of evangelicals’ statement of faith is
included in Appendix E. Second, interviews intentionally focus on the broad, diverse songwriting needs of the evangelical community within the church, academia and Christian Music Industry. Some of these needs include theological considerations, corporate worship considerations, production considerations and the diverse needs represented in the marketplace. Third, it deals exclusively with need for a songwriting manual. It is not the purpose to actually provide a manual or pedagogical workbook for the teaching of songwriting.

Statement of Methodology

The proposed methodology includes investigating the 1) Theological and Biblical foundations for songwriters, and 2) Interview of sixteen select songwriting professionals representing four divergent fields: pastor/teachers, songwriters, educators and music producers. Each group interviewed was given a set of five questions.\(^5\) Each set of questions uniquely addresses the songwriting needs within their group and are included in the chapter dealing with their area of need.

Biographies of Interviewees

While hundreds of men and women have helped nurture and mature the songwriting of the evangelical community, individuals were selected on the basis of their significance as pastors, composers, creators of “new song,” worship theologians, artists, and/or producers. The common factor between these individuals is that they are all evangelical in their theology and aware of the changing dynamics within the praise and worship industry.

Todd Dugard

Mr. Dugard is Senior Pastor and Elder at Harvest Bible Chapel, Barrie, in Ontario, Canada. Trained by Dr. James MacDonald, Mr. Dugard’s gifting in preaching is supported by his

\(^5\) These questions are included in the appendix.
ability to clearly understand and interpret Biblical text. Prior to serving at Harvest Bible Chapel in Barrie, Mr. Dugard was an associate pastor in St. Thomas, Ontario. He is a graduate of London Baptist Bible College and Heritage Seminary.\(^6\)

Mr. Dugard understands the role songs can play in teaching theology and the importance of composing songs that are true to God’s Word. Mr. Dugard offers a conservative theological perspective combined with a contemporary philosophy of ministry.

*Bob Kauflin*

Mr. Kauflin is a worship pastor in Louisville, KY. Although his first calling is to pastor, Mr. Kauflin has established a credible name for himself through a variety of different avenues. Mr. Kauflin holds a piano performance degree from Temple University. Upon graduating in 1976, he travelled with the Christian band, *Glad*. He remained with *Glad* for eight years as a performer, composer and arranger. Feeling called to vocational church ministry, Mr. Kauflin became involved with the Sovereign Grace church movement where he now oversees the music produced by the churches within their denomination. In recent years, Mr. Kauflin’s book, *Worship Matters*\(^7\) has established him as a credible author.\(^8\) An accomplished musician in his own right, Mr. Kauflin understands how congregational music needs to serve God’s people, giving them appropriate words and a voice to respond to His revelation.

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**Daniel Henderson**

Dr. Henderson is the president of Strategic Renewal, an organization dedicated to teaching churches prayer-based revitalization. Prior to founding Strategic Renewal, Dr. Henderson was the Senior Pastor of a number of mega churches in the United States and worked as a personal assistant to Dr. John MacArthur. In addition to teaching on prayer throughout North America, Dr. Henderson is also the part-time Pastor of Prayer at Mission Hills Church in Littleton, CO. He is a graduate of Liberty University and has authored or co-authored over ten books. His latest book, *The Deeper Life* is a reprint of his first book, which has been translated into 12 languages.

Dr. Henderson has devoted much of his career to the teaching of the need for prayer and revival in the church. As an expert on prayer, his insight and perspective as a pastor brings a unique dimension.

**Jody Cross**

Dr. Cross is a graduate of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. He has served the church faithfully for 25 years. Called to the ministry in 1988, Dr. Cross served in Ottawa, Toronto and Orangeville, Ontario before becoming the worship pastor at the first Canadian Harvest Bible Chapel in Barrie, Ontario. Recently, Dr. Cross has taken a worship pastor position at First Baptist Church in Orillia, Ontario. Dr. Cross has released four worship CD’s of original

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worship and praise songs. He is a much sought after worship leader and pastor-teacher of worship and has mentored scores of young worship leaders.

*Johnnie Moore*

At age 30, Mr. Moore is one of the youngest university executives in the United States. A student, and now, one of eight vice-presidents at Liberty University, Mr. Moore has established himself as a notable author, speaker, professor and humanitarian. In addition, Mr. Moore is a frequent conservative commentator with Fox News.

Prior to his administrative duties, Mr. Moore was a Campus Pastor at Liberty University where he was responsible for preaching to over 10,000 of students on a weekly basis. During his tenure as campus pastor, Mr. Moore was Executive Producer for two worship albums recorded by Liberty’s Campus Band. Currently Mr. Moore is completing doctoral studies at Harvard University.

Mr. Moore was hand-picked in 2006 by the late Dr. Jerry Falwell to take the reigns of Liberty’s weekly Wednesday night service. He is deeply passionate about people and the preaching of God’s Word. Mr. Moore is a passionate worshipper and preacher of worship and offers a unique pastoral perspective in the area of songwriting.

*David Hahn*

Mr. Hahn brings a wealth of experience as a worship leader, performer, composer and educator. Following his initial education at Nyack College in New York, Mr. Hahn served as Music and Youth Pastor at Syracuse Alliance Church. Shortly after, Mr. Hahn was called to

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Lancaster Christian and Missionary Alliance church where he served as Celebration Arts Pastor for 11 years. Completing the Master of Music History at Temple University, Mr. Hahn has taught voice, guitar, music technology and songwriting at Liberty University since 2008.13

Mr. Hahn is an intellectual who loves seeing the potential in others realized and released. He is a devoted scholar and talented musician, songwriter, arranger and composer. Mr. Hahn’s success as an educator may be observed in his students.

Rory Noland

Mr. Noland serves as director of Heart of the Artist Ministries, an organization dedicated to equipping and serving artists and musicians in local churches. He comes from a rich ministerial background. Before leaving to be a worship consultant at Harvest Bible Chapel in Rolling Meadows, Illinois, he served as Willow Creek Community Church’s Music Director for 20 years with Pastor Bill Hybels. Currently, Mr. Noland travels North America teaching and training worshippers. He is a published songwriter and the author of four books. His first book, The Heart of the Artist is respected and regarded by many as the definitive book of its nature.14

Mr. Noland has a deep passion for mentorship and educating young people. He is respected as an educator who knows the power of influence.

Chuck Fromm

Dr. Fromm has been a formidable force and influence in the Christian Music and Publishing community for more than 40 years. For 22 years Dr. Fromm was the president of Maranatha! Music, a praise and worship record label founded in California during the Jesus Movement. His achievements are so significant that the Gospel Music Association honored him

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13 David Hahn, resume sent to author, March 1, 2014.

with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 1990. In 1992, Dr. Fromm founded *Worship Leader Magazine*, a widely distributed trade publication in the music and worship industry today.

Dr. Fromm is passionate about teaching and training young worshipers. He is a celebrated speaker at worship conferences and is regularly invited to speak at influential schools in Great Britain, Canada, and the United States.\(^\text{15}\)

Dr. Fromm’s rich background in songwriting, publishing and Christian education provide a unique platform for the understanding and power of “new song” to shape “local theology” in the evangelical traditions.

*Tanya Riches*

Having grown up at Hillsong Church in Sydney Australia, Ms. Riches found herself in one of the epicenters of the Modern Worship Movement of the 1990’s. As a teenager she penned “Jesus What A Beautiful Name”, a song that would go on to peak at number six on CCLI’s worship charts. As a young adult she helped found Hillsong United. After serving for many years in Hillsong’s worship ministry, Ms. Riches became the lead singer of *Speaking of Sarah*, a rock/pop Christian music group that enjoyed high acclaim throughout Australia. Ms. Riches is currently completing her Ph.D. degree at Fuller Theological Seminary in California. She is respected as an authority on the history of Hillsong Church, worship, missiology and ethnomusicology.\(^\text{16}\)

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Paul Baloche

Mr. Baloche has recorded 12 albums with Integrity Music and published scores of resources for songwriters, guitarists and worship leaders. He has faithfully served on the worship team at Community Christian Fellowship in Lindale, Texas for 22 years. Mr. Baloche’s passion for the local church and God’s people is seen in the large number of songs that he and his wife, Rita have written strategically for the evangelical community.17

Twila Paris

Having released 22 albums over the past 33 years, Ms. Paris has been a mainstay of Contemporary Christian Music. Her gifting as a songwriter is unmistakable a variety of accolades and awards that attest to the influence of her compositions. Many of Ms. Paris’ compositions including, “We Bow Down”, “We Will Glorify”, “He Is Exalted” and “Lamb of God” are included in many hymnals. In addition to her music, Ms. Paris has authored three books on worship and theology.18 The longevity of her songs and their inclusion in multiple denominational publications makes Ms. Paris an ideal participant as in interviewee.

Don Marsh

Mr. Marsh has long been a part of the songwriting landscape in the evangelical community. From his work with Sandi Patti at the height of her career in the mid 1980’s to his innovative musicals, Mr. Marsh’s contributions to the Contemporary Christian Music are monumental. Mr. Marsh has received 13 Dove Award nominations, two Dove Awards and three Emmy’s. He earned the Angel Award and a Gold Record for sales exceeding half a million units.


for the Praise and Worship series, *Lift Him Up*. In recent years, Mr. Marsh has served on the faculty at the Center for Music and Worship at Liberty University and partnered with his wife, Lorie in producing the annual “Virginia Christmas Spectacular” at Thomas Road Baptist Church.19

*Lorie Marsh*

Ms. Marsh has assisted in many print and recording projects written by her husband Don and through them, established herself as a respected composer and lyricist for both the church and in the Christian Music Industry and Marketplace. In addition to her gifts as a composer and lyricist, she has also developed skills as a music publisher and song scout through her work at Maranatha! Music and currently as Chief Executive Officer of Operations at Red Tie Music.

*Keith Smith*

As a young producer, Mr. Smith worked with the late legendary producer Phil Ramone and is well-known to bands in Nashville, Tennessee. After studying at the Ohio State University for two years, Mr. Smith accepted a full scholarship at Liberty University where he completed a worship degree in Liberty’s School of Music. In 2008, Mr. Smith was invited to join Saddleback Church as director of instrumental music. During his time there, Mr. Smith worked with a number of artists including Tommy Walker, Matt Papa, Meredith Andrews and Jadon Lavik. Mr. Smith currently lives in Nashville, Tennessee where he continues to work in developing artists, writing and producing for both Christian and secular markets.20

*Mike Harland*

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Serving at both small rural churches as well as mega churches, Mr. Harland has over 25 years of music ministry experience. A graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, he is an accomplished musician and songwriter. Mr. Harland is president of Lifeway Christian Resources and served as the executive director and compiler of *The Baptist Hymnal* (2008), a well-respected contemporary hymnal for the evangelical church. He is a well-respected name in the worship industry and speaks at worship conferences across the country.21

*Greg Nelson*

Mr. Nelson is a well-known producer of Contemporary Christian Music. Through the years Mr. Nelson has produced records for Sandi Patty, Amy Grant, Steven Curtis Chapman, Michael W. Smith, and Richard Smallwood. He served as the first director of publishing for Sparrow Records in California and was involved in the creation of print products for Keith Green and 2nd Chapter of Acts. Following a move to Nashville, Nelson produced seven Grammy Award Winning albums and received 13 Grammy nominations and 26 Dove Awards. In one year, Mr. Nelson was involved with nine out of the ten songs selected as Song of the Year at the Dove Awards. He has received lifetime achievement awards from the Gospel Music Association and Broadcast Music Incorporated.

Currently, Mr. Nelson serves as Creative Supervisor for Lifeway Worship where he has been an integral part of recording over 1000 hymns and worship songs as part of Lifeway’s online hymnal resource website. Most recently Mr. Nelson organized WorldSongNow, a non-profit company committed to developing an international online hymnal in multiple languages that can be used to as a resource for worship leaders and songwriters around the globe.22

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22 Greg Nelson, resume sent to author, March 1, 2014.
Adam Lancaster

Mr. Lancaster is a gifted instrumentalist and innovative producer. The youngest of three children, Mr. Lancaster is establishing himself as a respected musician and contributor of worship song while serving as Music Director at Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia and accompanist for Charles Billingsley. He has travelled internationally with Billingsley’s ministry, including a two-year engagement working for pastor and radio Bible teacher Dr. David Jeremiah in California.  

Chapter Two - Comparative Analysis of Available Songwriting Resources

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate the available resources in songwriting. Strategic attention is devoted to the availability of pedagogical materials for the writing of song in the evangelical tradition. This chapter will list and briefly analyze secular and Christian books, dissertations, theses and journals that include elements pertaining to songwriting. The analysis is organized into two sections: 1) Inventory and Analysis of Books; and, 2) Inventory and Analysis of Dissertations, Theses and Journals. Comparative analysis will demonstrate how these resources are relative to the subject of songwriting for the evangelical community and how investigated material will provide contribution to the pedagogical discipline of the songwriting.

Inventory and Analysis of Books

American Popular Music by Larry Starr and Christopher Waterman is a college level 20th Century music appreciation textbook with accompanying CD used by Berklee School of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. Chronicling the history of rock and roll, the textbook is full of lyrical examples and demonstrates how song form is used in different styles of music. Whereas it cites the importance of black gospel music in the history of rock and roll, it ignores other forms of Christian music, including the modern worship movement and the plethora of compositions related to its genre.

All You Need To Know About The Music Business is a well-respected book by Donald S. Passman often used in college-level music business courses. The content of the book helps students understand how copyright works, exposing them to the details surrounding how royalties are earned. Because no attention is given to worship music, it fails to articulate how organizations like Christian Copyright Licensing International operate and function in
collecting royalties on compositions written for congregational worship in the evangelical church.

Dr. Lucy Green is the author of *How Popular Musicians Learn*, a textbook that explores how students learn, emulate and reproduce music. In chapter seven of her text, Dr. Green offers a brief portion on the benefits of group composition in a classroom setting that could be applied to students desiring to compose congregational worship music. Dr. Green neither explores how musicians learn in a church context, nor explores how musicians learn to compose in a church culture setting.

Brian Wilson is one of the most celebrated composers of 20\textsuperscript{th} Century rock and roll music. Philip Lambert’s book, *Inside the Music of Brian Wilson* explores in detail the classical principles of song form and harmony Wilson implemented in some of his most well known pieces. Whereas the textbook might be helpful in exposing young worship songwriters to more complex popular music and principles therein, it has no Christian emphasis or focus.

*The Cambridge Companion to Pop and Rock* edited by Simon Frith, Will Straw and John Street is a college level music appreciation textbook focusing on the historical elements of how 20\textsuperscript{th} Century music developed. Although the text is well detailed in chronicling significant composers and their most notable compositions, Christian music including the highly influential modern worship music movement, is ignored completely.

*Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music* by Mark Allan Powell is an exhaustive reference of Christian music. Largely a historical book, it provides a brief biography and discography for many Christian worship artists and songwriters. It also includes a list of their notable compositions, including songs that charted on Christian radio. However, no detailed information is provided on how these compositions were crafted.
Worship is a small trade book written by prolific worship songwriter, Darlene Zschech. Zschech briefly outlines the function of the worship leader according to the philosophy of Hillsong church. She also includes a section on how to work effectively with the Senior Pastor. Chapter five addresses spontaneous music within the worship service, but no instruction is offered on how to write songs for a congregation.

Graham Kendrick is a legendary composer of congregational worship music. His songs, “Shine, Jesus Shine”, “Meekness and Majesty” and “The Servant King” are sung around the world and included in many hymnals. His book, Learning to Worship As A Way of Life describes what worship is and how to facilitate and lead worship. Chapter ten is titled “Creativity in Worship” and offers suggestions on how worship can be expressed corporately. The craft of songwriting and composition for worship are not addressed.

Stephen Miller’s book, Worship Leaders We Are Not Rock Stars has an excellent chapter on the worship leader’s role as a theologian. The principles and concepts explored provide basic foundation for further study by songwriters and composers of Christian song.

Worship On Earth As It Is In Heaven is a book written by songwriter and lecturer, Rory Noland. The purpose is to teach worshippers practical instruction on the discipline of worship both as a private practice and corporate event. Chapter five provides some helpful teaching on the attributes of God and why Christians need to focus on them in private and corporate worship and provides songwriters apt rationale for writing lyric on the character of God. It does not provide pedagogical songwriting material or how the songwriter should use good theology in creating lyrics.

Called to Worship: The Biblical Foundations of Our Response to God’s Call is a historically driven text written by Vernon Whaley. Drawing a thread through the whole of
Scripture, Whaley draws out themes of worship in nearly every book of the Bible. The text would make an excellent source of reference for worship composers, but offers no instruction on how to specifically develop Biblical themes into congregational lyrics.

_The Same Love: A Devotion_ is a companion book to Paul Baloche’s album of the same name. Written by Baloche, the book offers biblically-based devotions surrounding the themes of each song. In some circumstances Baloche shares the stories behind how the compositions were inspired, but there is no deliberate analysis of any of the songs or instruction on how to write in the themes explored in the book.

_The Great Worship Awakening_ by Robb Redman is a historical text chronicling the history and development of the modern worship music movement. Redman provides a detailed backdrop of the events and circumstances that led to the outpouring of new worship music and the institution of praise and worship music as a viable commercial product. In chapter two he discusses the importance of theology in music.

Doug and Tami Flather authored a book called _The Praise and Worship Team Instant Tune-Up_, a book dedicated to providing worship leaders with creative practical ways to enhance their worship ministries. Chapter two offers some creative ideas for arranging including a basic discussion on song form. However, there is no specific instruction or mention of songwriting. Like other “how-to” books, it seems as though the topic of songwriting is largely ignored or forgotten.

Darlene Zschech’s book _The Kiss of Heaven: God’s Favor to Empower Your Life Dream_ is a devotional-based book on worship that highlights the connection between worship and the blessing of God. Chapter eight is specifically devoted to congregational worship. Zschech validates the gifts every believer has to edify and bless the church. There is no specific mention
of songwriting as one of these gifts, or the role songwriting can play in expressing the move of God in a specific congregation.

*The Art of Worship* by Greg Scheer is a practical “how-to” book for the worship leader. Chapter three provides a helpful basis for evaluating lyrics, while chapter five explains the theory behind writing simple harmonies. Scheer’s content is applicable for songwriters and would certainly have a place in the education of songwriting theologians.

*Sing With Understanding* is a book on Christian hymnody written by Harry Eskew and Hugh T. McElrath. Historically based, the book provides biographical information behind many celebrated composers. In addition, it also describes the form of hymn writing, with lyrical examples. Specifically, the content of chapter two clearly describes the intentional development of rhythm, meter and melody citing well-known hymns such as “Amazing Grace” and “Joy to the World” as examples.

*The Message In The Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship* is a book edited by Robert Woods and Brian Walrath that links a number of essays that analyze and critique the lyrics behind 77 of the top contemporary worship songs sung in American churches. A fascinating historical read, chapters two through five offer helpful insight into the relationship between cultural influences and worship lyrics including the influences of American romanticism, justice, humanism and the expression of pain and suffering. Although it is not an instructional text, some of the content could be adapted to demonstrate the cultural influences songwriters face and the discipline required to craft timeless, universally relatable lyrics.

*Jubilate! Church Music In The Evangelical Tradition* is a textbook by Donald P. Hustad that has been used through the years in many institutions for the training of music ministers. Although much is said about church worship history and the various elements that make up
worship expressions of the evangelical church, nothing is said about songwriting. There is a small section on contemporary worship in Hustad’s postscript that outlines some common principles related to contemporary expressions of worship that are worth considering as a congregational songwriter. However, there is nothing of significance that deals with the pedagogical need or process of equipping songwriters for the evangelical community.

*The Heart of the Artist* by Rory Noland has become a definitive text on building a worship ministry in the 21st century. In chapter four, Noland highlights how original songs document the history of a congregation and what God has done in that particular body of believers.

*The Heart of Worship Files* is a book compiled by worship artist and composer, Matt Redman. Two chapters include material on the topic of songwriting; one on making melody, and, the other on lyric writing. Contributors to these chapters include Redman, Brian Doerksen, Chris Tomlin, Matyn Layzell, Dave Clifton, Kathryn Scott, Tim Hughes, Andy Park, Andy Piercy, and Charlie Hall. In essence, these chapters are collections of quotations from the above-mentioned songwriters and composers.

*Worship Words* is a book by Debra and Ron Rienstra that examines the role of language within the worship experience. Chapter six in particular examines the power of metaphor in the worship expression of the church, including the singing of worship lyrics. The content used in engaging worship songwriters to think about how they craft the use of metaphors in lyrics may be used in the training of songwriters. However, nothing of significance is included in the book that speaks to the need or process of developing a pedagogical tool for the training of songwriting.
*Worship Matters* by Bob Kauflin is quickly becoming a favorite book among music ministers. In his book, Kauflin discusses the roles, tasks, and tensions of the worship leader. Although there is no dedicated section on songwriting, chapter 12 offers some insight into the types of songs worship songwriters should be writing for the corporate church, while chapters 28 through 31 offer some helpful principles that could be adapted into a section on how to develop a songwriting culture in the local church.

*Extravagant Worship* by Darlene Zschech is a devotional book on worship that urges the readers to give their best to God in every facet of their lives. In chapter seven, “Songs from Heaven,” Zschech discusses the art of penning songs for the local church. She itemizes eight criteria for writing congregational worship music. All of which are practical considerations songwriters need to consider and should be used in the teaching and training of songwriters for the evangelical community.

Chapter 15 of Andy Park’s book *To Know You More* is titled “The Gift and Craft of Songwriting”. Drawing from personal examples, Park shares lyrics and encourages his readers to be disciplined songsmiths. Park offers a handful of helpful insights but absent under his heading “Cultivating the Ground for Songwriting” is instruction on how to cultivate a worship songwriting atmosphere within a local church.

*Tunesmith* by Jimmy Webb is a well-respected, secular trade book on the craft of songwriting. Drawing from Webb’s rich history as an award-winning writer, Webb offers an exhaustive amount of wisdom on how to develop memorable melodies and meaningful lyrics. Like so many secular books, they excel in articulating universal principles, but neglect some of the specific considerations (like theology) that need to be considered when crafting congregational worship songs.
The Craft of Lyric Songwriting by Sheila Davis is one of the most honored books on the topic of lyric writing. Drawing from Davis’ ASCAP and BMI workshops given in the 1970’s and 80’s, it is a treasure trove of lyric writing instruction. The book does not cite any examples of Praise and Worship or Contemporary Christian literature. Most of her observations are not necessarily appropriate or applicable to the use of lyrics for congregational worship.

God Songs by Paul Baloche, Jimmy and Carol Owens is one of the most significant books dealing with songwriters of for the evangelical community. The book is a thoughtful text full of easy-to-read checklists and helpful theoretical content. However, it does not give adequate focus to the importance of “local theology” in developing songwriters to meet the needs in the evangelical community. The book addresses how worship leaders can create a culture of songwriting in their local churches.

Pat Pattison’s book, Writing Better Lyrics is the textbook for lyric writing currently used at Berklee School of Music in Boston, Massachusetts. Filled with excellent examples and exercises to develop use of metaphor, repetition, and meter, the book does not articulate Christian resources for songwriting. The book is primarily targeted to the secular constituent and does not address the lyrical challenges of writing from Scripture, including hermeneutical and theological considerations.

The Words We Sing by Nan Corbitt Allen is a thoughtful book that explores the meaning behind a handful of words frequently sung in corporate worship—but may not be fully understood. Although there is no songwriting instruction, a selected amount of its content might provide a helpful glossary-addendum for worship songwriters not familiar with the meaning behind some often used biblical phrases, names and terms.
The Craft of Christian Songwriting by Robert Sterling is a trade book currently used by a number of Christian institutions. It is an exhaustive text written from a Christian worldview with helpful examples to demonstrate principles. The book largely focuses on composing Christian music for commercial markets. It does not specifically focus on writing songs for the local church.

The Craft and Business of Songwriting by John Braheny is another textbook widely endorsed by Broadcast Music Incorporated and the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers communities in which Braheny frequently lectures. Unlike some of Braheny’s contemporaries, he does provide a section in his book that addresses Christian books. Sadly, out of 400 pages, it only takes up two paragraphs and is an encouragement to secular writers to consider commercial Christian music as a viable outlet to pitch their songs. In mentioning Christian music, there is no reference to church music—only Christian music written for the commercial market.

Songwriting for Dummies is part of the “Dummy” series of books, which have sold over 100 million copies, combined. Written by Jim Peterik, a Grammy award songwriter with Dave Austin and Mary Ellen Bickford, it is a simple, “how-to” instructional book. Two pages discuss the history of Christian and Gospel music as a genre and argues for their validity and viability in the broader, commercial music market. There is no mention of principles related to composing for congregational worship or the unique considerations needed for congregational worship music.

Jason Blume offers two pages to the genre of Christian music in his book, 6 Steps to Songwriting Success. There is no focus whatsoever on congregational church worship music. Blume discusses how the Christian music market operates, giving a brief history of the genre and
citing three of largest Christian publishers. From one standpoint, Blume discourages his readers from writing Christian music by noting that Christian composers do not always earn as much money as secular ones.

Inventory and Analysis of Dissertations, Theses and Journals

J.J. Lee (Ph.D., University of Exeter), has written a dissertation titled, *New Birth: Research into new possibilities for Christian worship*. Lee seeks to contrast traditional Jewish worship expressions with those conducted by the early church. Although music is mentioned, there is no detailed information on the types of songs composed for these events or how they were constructed.

John William Harrellson (Ph.D., Claremont Graduate University) has written a dissertation titled, *Theme and variation, call and response: A critical history of America’s music* in which he chronicles the history and development of American pop music. Although the influence of gospel music and black spirituals are accounted for, there is no detailed information provided on how these songs were composed. Little attention is given to Christian music and there is no mention of contemporary worship music.

Judah Cohen’s article, *The Jewish sound of things* found in the *Material Religion* journal explores the many facets of how music was created within the Jewish culture. Attention is given to instrumentation used within Jewish religious festivals. A fascinating study, the paper is more concentrated on the sociological and religious influences on Jewish music, rather than an analysis of Jewish compositions.

Ryan Paul Harper (Ph.D., Princeton University) has written a dissertation, *A sort of homecoming: The Gaither’s and Southern Gospel into the twenty-first century*. Harper examines how the Gaithers’ have preserved Southern Gospel music while seeking to expand the genre and
their audience. The study is more concentrated on the Gaithers’ movement and their influence than the nature of the Gaither songwriting practices.

*Holy rock and rollers: A fantasy theme analysis of American Evangelicalism in Christian heavy metal* is a thesis written by Jeremy V. Adolphson (M.A., Northern Illinois University) that examines the influence of Christian heavy metal. The thesis offers some detailed analysis of some Christian heavy metal compositions, but limits itself to the discography of the band, *As I Lay Dying*.

*Music for the modern church: Jazz and rock influences in original compositions* is a thesis by Jeremy Ray Porras (M.M., California State University, Long Beach). In his paper, Porras offers a detailed rhythmic, harmonic, melodic and performance analysis of three original worship compositions demonstrating the influence of jazz and rock on his composition style. Whereas the analysis of Porra’s compositions is detailed, it is limited to his specific works and a greater body of well-known worship compositions.

In his paper, *Popular Influences in Recent Church Composition* published in *The Choral Journal*, Lawrence R. Mumford argues that 21st Century choral composers should allow themselves to be influenced by contemporary music, sacred and secular in order to create a truly unique body of work. Mumford’s paper is primarily focused on choral music practices. It does not present the case for the composition of new choral music or its use in congregational worship.

*Hymns as a resource for the language of worship* published in *Hymn – A Journal of Congregational Song* is an article by Robin Knowles Wallace. Wallace argues for the use of hymn texts throughout the worship service including calls to worship, collects, prayers of confession, benedictions, prayers of the people and sermons. There is no detailed discussion on the development or craft of hymn lyrics.
Mark W. Harris (D.Min., Emmanuel College of Victoria University) wrote a major paper titled, *The search for meaning in congregational worship*. Harris created a worship experience attended by a small group of people. After attending the worship service, Harris led the group through a reflective process and documented his findings. Although it is an interesting study, there is no focus given to the songwriter of the music used in service used in Harris’ study.

Colin Gibson has written an article for *The Clergy Journal* called *The role of hymns in worship tomorrow*. In his paper, Gibson argues that the practice of singing hymns extends Christian traditions, enforces the basics of the Christian faith, provides opportunities to address contemporary issues and declares the equality of Christians with one another. Gibson’s paper is an endorsement for a specific song form. He does not provide any specific lyrical or musical analysis.

James William Adams II (D.Min., Drew University) has written a major paper, *Creative collaboration as a catalyst for postmodern preaching and worship*. In his document, Adams develops a collaborative group process for planning worship services. Adams gives attention to collaborative planning as it pertains to preaching. Little emphasis is placed on corporate musical worship or how to develop a creative culture of music composition within a local church.

*The role of the praise and worship leader: A model for preparing the singer for leadership in contemporary worship* is a dissertation by Phyllis Anita Moss (D.Min., Interdenominational Theological Center). In her paper, Moss proposes an educational model for training praise and worship leaders. Moss discusses the many roles of a worship leader in the contemporary church. She does not include songwriter as one of the potential roles of a worship leader.
Vera D. Stanojevic (D.M.A., Ohio State University) has written a dissertation titled, *An approach to the pedagogy of beginning music composition: Teaching understanding and realization of the first steps in composing music*. Whereas the principles described address many of the process of composition and songwriting pedagogy, there is no direct application to worship music or consideration of the unique considerations and limitations of composing for an evangelical congregation.

Paul Inwood’s article, “*Inspirat*ion” and writing music: A personal reflection (published in *Pastoral Music*) discusses the difference between a “liturgical” and “art” composer. Inwood argues that the latter type of composer seeks to express the thoughts, ideas and concerns of a congregation. Inwood’s study is a helpful reference to the promotion local theology in the songwriting process.

James Williams Cobbs Jr. (D.Min., United Theological Seminary) has written a thesis titled, *Music as ministry in an urban African-American church*. In his major writing project, Cobb develops a program specific to an African-American congregation in Virginia. One of the purposes of the study deals with the difference between genuine and entertainment-driven worship. Although music is discussed, including cultural considerations when ministering to different ethnic groups, no compositional data is present.

Jeffery Tucker’s article, *Why sacred music matters* (published in the journal, *Sacred Music*) argues the importance of sacred music is creating reverence and awareness of the divine. He argues that contemporary expressions of worship music lack excellence, sobriety and gravity. He goes on to suggest that a palette of differing musical styles is not helpful to church congregations and that pastors should seek reform towards traditional chants. Tucker writes
from a catholic background and his philosophy of what types of congregational music need to be
used in corporate worship would not best serve the needs of the evangelical church.

*Music as prayer* is an article by Amy E. Guettler also published in the journal, *Sacred
Music*. Guettler explains why sacred music is important to the liturgy of the Catholic Church.
She concludes that music becomes sacred because of its association with occasions, sacred art,
texts and traditions. Guettler’s conclusions reflect a stark contrast between catholic and
evangelical philosophies of sacred music, the most obvious being that evangelicals denote sacred
music by who the music is directed to, opposed to its association with historical relics.

*Sonic change, social change, sacred change: Music and the reconfiguration of American
Christianity* is a dissertation by Deborah Justuce (Ph.D., Indiana University) that studies the
challenges faced by a Nashville, Tennessee congregation in expressing emergent identities and
biblical truths in their worship services. Because Justuce’s paper is focused on and concerned
with the general expression of faith in a worship service (of which music is only one component),
a musical analysis of worship compositions is not provided.

*Compositions with analytical commentary* is a thesis by R. Bryan Anthony (M.M.C.M.,
New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) that analyzes the styles and procedures in arranging
and presenting classically based worship compositions vocal ensemble, hand bell choir and
SATB choir. Although attention is given to the varying styles of each piece, no in-depth
composition analysis or instruction in songwriting technique is provided.
Chapter Three – Biblical Foundations for Songwriting

Within any culture, music and religion are often inseparable. God’s people are no exception. Throughout the history of Christianity music has been a hallmark of Christ-followers. Even to the unchurched, thoughts of a worship service frequently conjure up a sense of music, be it a praise band, pipe organ or acapella singing. The Bible mentions many songwriters: David, Moses, Solomon, Isaiah, Deborah, Barak, Job, Daniel, Asaph, Paul, Sons of Korah, Mary, Zechariah, Miriam, John, Ezra and others. However, in order for there to be songs to sing, there must be songwriters to compose them. After examining the Scriptures, it becomes very apparent that songwriters play a vital role throughout Scripture in accomplishing five specific purposes:

i) Songwriters are historians—composing songs that preserve, reflect upon and remember what God has done.

ii) Songwriters are facilitators—giving people a language to express their:
   a. Praise and gratitude for God and all He’s done.
   b. Confession, consecration and re-commitment.
   c. Lament.

iii) Songwriters are encouragers—edifying and admonishing God’s people towards spiritual growth.

iv) Songwriters are educators—teaching doctrine and truth about the character of God.

v) Songwriters are evangelists—inspiring and providing the church with a language of witness and warning.

The purpose is to demonstrate the significant role songwriters have in Scripture, their role in Christian history and the Biblical mandate to compose songs of worship for the church today.
Many times songs are birthed during periods of revival in the church when God is undoubtedly at work in his people. That same pattern is revealed in Scripture with songs arising after significant and sometimes miraculous events. The content composed by biblical songwriters is frequently a testimony to what the Lord has done.

One example of this is in the song of Moses and Miriam from the book of Exodus, following the crossing of the Red Sea, “Then Moses and the Israelites sang this song to the Lord: “I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. Both horse and driver he has hurled into the sea.”

Another example of music being used to capture and respond to a historic event occurs during the dedication of Solomon’s temple. This event was very significant because it marks the completion of God’s first physical dwelling place—a vision given to David, but fulfilled by his son, Solomon. A short song was composed for the temple dedication service which upon singing evoked the manifest presence of God in such a mighty way that it incapacitated the priests.

The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place. All the priests who were there had consecrated themselves, regardless of their divisions. All the Levites who were musicians—Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives—stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres. They were accompanied by 120 priests sounding trumpets. The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the Lord. Accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the Lord and sang:

“He is good; his love endures forever.”

Then the temple of the Lord was filled with the cloud, and the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God.

In addition to being historians, songwriters are also facilitators, offering God’s people words and music to express their gratitude, consecration and commitment, confession and

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24 Exodus 15:1 (NIV)

25 2 Chronicles 5:11-14 (NIV)
lament. Perhaps the legitimacy and justification for songwriters is most clearly shown in the inclusion of the Psalms in the cannon of Scripture. The word, “Psalm” is derived from the Greek word, “psalmos” which means “song” or “hymn.” The book of Psalms is a collection of 150 songs that were composed by a number of composers including David, Asaph, the sons of Korah, Moses, and Solomon. Scholarship typically divides psalms into seven types including hymns, penitential, wisdom, royal, messianic, imprecatory and lament. Songs of praise and gratitude are most commonly seen in hymn-type psalms. A clear example of a song composed by David for these purposes is Psalm 8, which reflects upon the transcendence and greatness of God and how it contrasts with the smallness of humanity,

LORD, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory
in the heavens.
Through the praise of children and infants
you have established a stronghold against your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.
When I consider your heavens,
the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars,
which you have set in place,
what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them?
You have made them a little lower than the angels
and crowned them with glory and honor.
You made them rulers over the works of your hands;
you put everything under their feet:
all flocks and herds,
and the animals of the wild,
the birds in the sky,
and the fish in the sea,
all that swim the paths of the seas.

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LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!²⁸

Psalm 136 is another example of a psalm composed to offer praise and gratitude for who  
God is and what He has done. Scholars believe the psalm was used as a responsive reading  
among the people of Israel. The worship leader would read one portion, while the people would  
respond with next portion and so on.

Give thanks to the L ORD, for he is good.  
_His love endures forever._  
Give thanks to the God of gods.  
_His love endures forever._  
Give thanks to the Lord of lords:  
_His love endures forever._  
to him who alone does great wonders,  
_His love endures forever._  
who by his understanding made the heavens,  
_His love endures forever._  
who spread out the earth upon the waters,  
_His love endures forever._²⁹

Perhaps the most well known psalm of praise and gratitude is Psalm 150. In the psalm,  
the composer commands the people of God to praise the Lord 13 times within six verses!

_Praise the L ORD._  
Praise God in his sanctuary;  
praise him in his mighty heavens.  
Praise him for his acts of power;  
praise him for his surpassing greatness.  
Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,  
praise him with the harp and lyre,  
praise him with timbrel and dancing,  
praise him with the strings and pipe,  
praise him with the clash of cymbals,  
praise him with resounding cymbals.  
Let everything that has breath praise the L ORD.  
Praise the L ORD.³⁰

²⁸ Psalm 8 (NIV).
²⁹ Psalm 136:1-6 (NIV).
³⁰ Psalm 150 (NIV).
Songwriters also implore the people of God to confess their sins to God and to consecrate and recommit their lives to His service. Like songs of gratitude, these types of songs are frequently found in the book of Psalms and are referred to as penitential psalms. Two specific things may characterize penitential psalms: an expressed sorrow for sin and an appeal to God for forgiveness, healing and restoration. Psalm 38 is a good example:

**Psalm 38:1-8 (NIV).**

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LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your wrath.
Your arrows have pierced me,
and your hand has come down on me.
Because of your wrath there is no health in my body;
there is no soundness in my bones because of my sin.
My guilt has overwhelmed me
like a burden too heavy to bear.
My wounds fester and are loathsome
because of my sinful folly.
I am bowed down and brought very low;
all day long I go about mourning.
My back is filled with searing pain;
there is no health in my body.
I am feeble and utterly crushed;
I groan in anguish of heart.  
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Perhaps, the most famous example of a Biblical song composed for the purposes of confession, consecration and recommitment is Psalm 51. Written by King David, the song is the confession of his affair with Bathsheba and murder of her husband. The background story of the song is captured within the narrative of 2 Samuel 12. Yet, the song itself has been written with enough generality that its content is universal, appealing to all, regardless of our sin. Through the centuries Psalm 51 has been adopted and remediated by the church as a powerful song of confession.

**Psalm 51:1-10 (NIV).**

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Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your unfailing love;
according to your great compassion
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31 Psalm 38:1-8 (NIV).
blot out my transgressions.
Wash away all my iniquity
and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is always before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are right in your verdict
and justified when you judge.
Surely I was sinful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother conceived me.
Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb;
you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness;
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins
and blot out all my iniquity.
Create in me a pure heart, O God,
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me from your presence
or take your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.\textsuperscript{32}

Songwriters are also facilitators of lament. Songs of lament hold three basic characteristics. First, they reflect a person’s condition. Second, they declare trust in God. Third, they announce one’s resolve to praise God. Written by David while he was on the run for his life from his son, Absalom, who was attempting to overthrow his kingdom, Psalm Three is an example of a song of lament:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{LORD, how many are my foes!}
How many rise up against me!
Many are saying of me,
“God will not deliver him.”
But you, LORD, are a shield around me,
my glory, the One who lifts my head high.
I call out to the LORD,
and he answers me from his holy mountain.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{32} Psalm 51:1-12 (NIV).
I lie down and sleep;  
I wake again, because the LORD sustains me.  
I will not fear though tens of thousands  
assail me on every side.  
Arise, LORD!  
Deliver me, my God!  
Strike all my enemies on the jaw;  
brake the teeth of the wicked.  
From the LORD comes deliverance.  
May your blessing be on your people.\(^\text{33}\)

Psalm Six provides another example of lament song. David communicates his anguish before the Lord and asks how long he must wait before the Lord delivers him. The psalm concludes with a change in David’s attitude as seen in his declaration of trust in God, believing that God has heard his prayer and will deliver him from his distress.

LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger  
or discipline me in your wrath.  
Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint;  
heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.  
My soul is in deep anguish.  
How long, LORD, how long?  
Turn, LORD, and deliver me;  
save me because of your unfailing love.  
Among the dead no one proclaims your name.  
Who praises you from the grave?  
I am worn out from my groaning.  
All night long I flood my bed with weeping  
and drench my couch with tears.  
My eyes grow weak with sorrow;  
they fail because of all my foes.  
Away from me, all you who do evil,  
for the LORD has heard my weeping.  
The LORD has heard my cry for mercy;  
the LORD accepts my prayer.  
All my enemies will be overwhelmed with shame and anguish;  
they will turn back and suddenly be put to shame.\(^\text{34}\)

\(^{33}\)Psalm 3 (NIV).

\(^{34}\)Psalm 6 (NIV).
The Biblical Function of Songwriting

Songwriters are evangelists, providing congregants with a language of witness and warning to unbelievers. One of the most convincing examples in Scripture comes from the story of King Jehoshaphat in 2 Chronicles. King Jehoshaphat leads the people of Israel into victory by using the power of praise delivered through a song.

After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the LORD and to praise him for the splendor of his holiness as they went out at the head of the army, saying:

“Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.”

As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated.  

Israel’s praise-infused victories quickly spreads to neighboring countries causing them to fear the power and might of the one true God. “The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.”

Scripture also teaches that songwriters are to be encouragers to the people of God. Paul instructs the people of Colossae, “Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.” It is interesting to note that the content responsible for admonishing the people of God is the “message of Christ”—His Word, dwelling

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35 2 Chronicles 20:20b-22 (NIV).
36 2 Chronicles 20:29-30 (NIV).
37 Colossians 3:16 (NIV).
richly within us. Such instruction is a needed reminder for songwriters to compose music that is saturated in the Word of God.

Another passage commanding similar instruction is found in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, where an evidence of a Spirited-filled life is manifested through song! “Be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs: Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (emphasis added).”

Songwriters are educators. Like preachers, songwriters carry a heavy responsibility of conveying and communicating truth accurately in a way that informs and trains others what to think about God. Thought to be an early church hymn, the Pauline composition from Colossians One provides theological and doctrinal teaching, emphasizing the songwriter’s role as an educator:

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Some truths taught from these verses include:

a. The deity of Christ-“The Son is the image of the invisible God. . .”
b. The supremacy of Christ-“. . .the firstborn over all creation. . .”
c. Christ as creator of all things-“. . .all things have been created through him and for him. . .”
d. Christ as the head of the church-“And he is the head of the body, the church . . .”
e. Christ as reconciler between God and man-“. . .to reconcile to himself all Things. . .by making peace through his blood. . .”

38 Ephesians 5:18b-20 (NIV).
39 Colossians 1:15-20 (NIV).
Another example of a song that teaches doctrine is recorded by The Apostle John in The Revelation:

“You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

Here a short song from The Revelation puts a number of doctrinal truths on the lips of its singers:

a. Doctrine of God’s Righteousness—“You are worthy to take the scroll.”

b. Doctrine of God’s Atonement—“...because you were slain, and with your blood.”

c. Doctrine of God’s Adoption—“...you purchased for God persons from every tribe.”

It may be concluded God ordains the role of songwriter as historian, facilitator, evangelist, encourager, and educator. It may be concluded that songwriters play a crucial, expressive role in the life of God’s people. These roles continue in the same capacities in the life of the church today.

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40 Revelation 5:9-10 (NIV).
Chapter Four - Songwriting in the Evangelical Community: Needs in the Church

Five pastors from differing backgrounds were interviewed to determine the songwriting needs of the evangelical church. These include: Mr. Johnnie Moore, Mr. Todd Dugard, Dr. Jody Cross, Mr. Bob Kauflin and Dr. Daniel Henderson. Each pastor was asked the following questions:

a) What does the Bible say about songwriting? Is songwriting important to God? Is there a role for songwriters to play in the local church body? If so, what is it?
b) From your perspective, what are the characteristics of an effective congregational song? What makes it appropriate lyrically and musically?
c) How do you think songwriters could be used in conjunction specifically with your preaching and teaching ministry? Is there a potential partnership there?
d) What are some benefits music has in communicating truth that are different from preaching and teaching? What benefits could effective songwriters bring to the worship atmosphere at your church?
e) Based on both well-composed and not-so-well composed congregational songs that you have been exposed to, what instruction would you give to songwriters as they write congregational worship music for their local church bodies?

After analyzing the data collected from these interviews, the following common threads regarding songwriting in the evangelical church seem apparent:

1. Songs that chronicle the life of a congregation and birthed out of community

Just like songs in the Bible chronicle God’s work in the Hebrew people, the songs needed in the church today should come out of what God is doing in the life of a congregation. Dr. Cross notes:

The Bible says that we are to sing a new song so it assumes that people respond to God in fresh ways. And fresh ways are not limited to historical times but to today and tomorrow. So really what the Bible is saying is that new songs should always be written and that there should be more and more new songs all the time as they flow out of what God is doing in the lives of people.41

Dr. Cross goes on to emphasize the “local voice” of a congregation:

41 Jody Cross, interviewed by author, January 11, 2014.
When you write with your congregation in mind you are actually giving a local voice to what is doing locally. It’s something that’s homegrown and owned by the people who are there local songwriters-in the context of the body, should be writing songs that speak to what God is doing that body…writing songs that go along with the experience of the work of God in the life of the local church.”

Mr. Kauflin explains how church congregations frequently sing expressions that have gained a global platform without considering the songs birthed out of the needs of their own congregation. Mr. Kauflin says, “a great lyric says something that’s on everybody’s heart but they don’t quite know how to say it.” There is a need for songwriters to be actively involved in a congregation and small group so they can attentively hear the heartbeat of the church, understand its communal needs and write with those things in mind. “You’ve got to know your congregation. You’ve got to know the people you’re singing to.”

Dr. Henderson says, “Songs are one of the most powerful expressions of our corporate prayers and worship as a body.” The need for songs written with the church’s specific needs in mind flows from the purpose behind every service, “. . .the preeminent activity or aim of congregational gatherings is to edify one another.” Part of the encouragement can stem from the celebration of using original pieces birthed within a local congregation. Mr. Moore states:

I think there’s a role for that local expression. There’s a need for it, and-when it does happen, on occasion, you see, you know, churches light up with the fact that so-and-so wrote that song.

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42 Jody Cross, interviewed by author, January 11, 2014.
43 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Daniel Henderson, interviewed by author, January 12, 2014.
47 Ibid.
Mr. Dugard notes other benefits that come as a result of writing with the life of a congregation in mind:

I’m a huge fan of songwriters writing in the context of local church, under the authority of God ordained leadership, because there’s a bit of a protection in that accountability. And then I think there’s also an inspiration that comes from being part of a local church. 49

Mr. Dugard also places emphasis on the need for songwriters to use inspiration from the Word of God as a source for application to the community to which they are ministering:

I think songwriters need to be students of the people around them both saved and unsaved. They need to see what people are going through. They need to study the word and see how that speaks into these situations and write these songs, ah, not just, you know, me alone in my room thinking about my own thoughts and what I’m going through, and, that’s great for personal devotions, but get out and see what people are experiencing. And so, involvement in a local church, involvement in a small group, involvement in other ministry, all these different ways that you could be rubbing shoulders with people and seeing what’s going on in their lives is going to help.

One benefit from writing within a community is the opportunity for collaboration. Songwriters that are a part of larger churches may discover a songwriting culture ready to be born at their church. Mr. Dugard sums up the principle of collaboration:

I’m really excited when I hear that songwriters get together and sharpen one another and when they ask, “Would you give this song a listen? Would you give me some help with this? What do you think I should do with this part? And it seems to me that in worship circles, there’s a lot of that going on and it’s really encouraging. I think it’s a really great thing. 50

Mr. Kauflin highlights the need for congregational songwriters to write songs that are fresh. Ones ability to determine what is fresh and stale within a song is to expose themselves to a wide variety of music and gain an appreciation for compositions written before they were born. Mr. Kauflin notes, “You can state unchanging, eternal truth in a boring way. You can state it in

49 Todd Dugard, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.

50 Ibid.
a trite way. A great lyric needs to state unchanging biblical truth in a fresh way that captures people’s hearts (emphasis added).”

2. Songs that are scripturally based and theologically and grammatically accurate

When analyzing the content of currently available resources on songwriting, very few resources spend little, if any time at all, addressing the theological considerations any congregational songwriter needs to soberly consider as they write for the church. God’s revelation to the church is clear, therefore the church’s response to Him ought to be clear as well. The five pastors interviewed were in full agreement.

Dr. Henderson makes the following observation about the need to write congregational song that expresses the worthiness of God, His character and the working of the Holy Spirit:

I think the most important part of an appropriate congregational song is that it is worthy of God and His character and so therefore it has to be, I believe, solid theologically, in terms of expressing truths to about God that are accurate and clear so that the minds of the people singing it are stimulated to think right thoughts of God.

The Holy Spirit is so important in our worship today but so much of the songs that are being written are very Old Testament in their concepts of the Holy Spirit. Things like the Holy Spirit coming down out of the ceiling or wherever he is coming down from instead of the Holy Spirit controlling our hearts and our minds, it’s more of a focus on the Holy Spirit almost being like an ‘it’ that’s going to appear rather than the very presence of the triune God in our hearts and that we need to submit and yield.

Mr. Dugard offers another insight regarding how the church articulates theology, pointing out that bad grammar can make a song scripturally week because of how the content is being presented,

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52 Daniel Henderson, interviewed by author, January 12, 2014.
53 Ibid.
It’s amazing how much a grammar error or grammar choice can throw off potential listeners and worshippers and we have a generation right that’s much less interested in this and that generation is writing the songs. So you have a generation that is less interested in grammar, they’re less educated in grammar. Grammar is evolving more rapidly now that I think it ever has in history and yet that’s the generation-this younger generation-that’s writing all the songs for us. You have to understand that this sets off people who are listening and potentially singing these songs.54

Dr. Cross, suggests several questions a congregational songwriter may want to consider when seeking to write songs that are scripturally accurate and full of truth:

a) Is it Biblical?
b) Does it speak truth?
c) Does it convey truth in the way that is singable?
d) Does it convey truth in a way that is memorable?
e) Does it convey truth in such a way that is creative and fresh?
f) Does it convey truth in a way that the music and the lyric work together to speak to the theme and the emotional impact of the song?
g) Does it fit a place in the body of Christ that is missing?55

Mr. Kauflin shares the need for Biblical accuracy derived in our role as a worship songwriter: “Our role is to come alongside the preaching of God’s Word, to support the preaching of God’s Word, to amplify the preaching of God’s Word.”56 Mr. Kauflin later articulates that, when congregants sing songs, they should “go away with a greater knowledge of who Jesus is, what He’s done, and why He did it.”57 All five pastors demonstrate a passion for truth and Biblical accuracy and are persuaded that worship songwriters should be theologically prepared as lyricists play to play a role in teaching congregations about God.

54 Todd Dugard, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.
57 Ibid.
3. Songs that serve sermons and the overall vision for each service set by the lead pastor

One common thought articulated by all five pastors interviewed is the desire to be in partnership with songwriters in their own congregational fellowship. They all see the benefit of working with songwriters to craft worship services that utilize original compositions and drive home a vision or theme. Depending on the needs of their church, they agreed that songwriters should be encouraged and trained to write “prescriptively”. Mr. Moore gives evidence as to how a theme song written for a sermon series preached at Liberty University helped to facilitate unity and cohesiveness between the worship pastor and worship team:

I remember one particular sermon series I did called “Kindle” – this is before Amazon had a “Kindle”. I was looking for a word for fire and I took out an old dusty dictionary and I found this word, “Kindle” and I wish I would have patented it or trademarked it, but I remember, you know, sitting there with a worship pastor at the time, Dave McKinney, and we dusted up an old, old, hymn, rewrote parts of it, and we had our own, sort of theme song to the sermon series. I had preached hundreds of sermons and dozens and dozens of series’ and yet that one is still kind of dog-eared in my brain because it had that cohesion between the worship through music and the worship through the Word, which is how we often refer to it here. And so, I think this is sort of an unexplored area in a lot of ways, and I think it goes a long way to shoot unity between the teaching pastor and the worship pastor if this is done intentionally.58

Dr. Cross advocates for songwriters to meet regularly with their lead pastor and begin first by attempting to write a theme song for their church for a specific preaching year. Additionally, he highlights the need to plan ahead so songs can be thoughtfully crafted, tested and proven within the local congregation:

It’s very effective if a songwriter and a pastor can work together, find a song that either functions as a theme song for a series or look over the Bible and find or compose a song that fits the yearly theme. Ideally, a senior pastor says to a songwriter, “hey, it’s June and in September we are going to be doing this new theme – you’ve got three months, I’d like you to craft a song around this theme.” So songwriters need the time because if they produce a song quickly it could be junk, which then undermines the whole point of

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actually writing songs in the local church to encourage people to think that they are good.\textsuperscript{59}

Dr. Henderson also endorses thematic writing. He also suggests using creative approaches in the service presentations that integrate songs, sermon and prayer into a free-flowing form:

I am beginning to find that it is so powerful in people’s lives because the best way to apply God’s Word, I think, is to pray it and to sing it rather than to just take notes for 45 minutes. I would love to see a new day when songwriters and pastors work together to integrate the teaching and worship and prayer into a dynamic experience that wouldn’t be segregated but it would be integrated, and to that end, I think a songwriter and a pastor could work together powerfully to create a truly transformational experience in worship by fitting all of those pieces together thematically; teaching, worship and prayer and maybe several moments of that in the context of worship services instead of a segregated traditional approach.\textsuperscript{60}

4. Songs that are written from a congregational, not individual perspective

One of the concerns the pastors shared during the interview process dealt with a perceived deficiency in grammatically corporate lyric. A February 2014 survey by Christian Copyright Licensing International indicates that out of the top 25 songs sung in North American churches only seven make use of corporate pronouns in their verses and choruses.\textsuperscript{61} Some songwriters seem to have lost a sense that congregational worship is a corporate, not individual experience. Whereas evangelicalism and the modern worship music have emphasized a personal relationship with Christ, modern hymnals seem to be somewhat void of truly corporate expressions. Dr. Henderson notes, “I think we have way too many singular pronouns in our corporate worship songs and I think plural pronouns are vital so that they capture the sense of

\textsuperscript{59} Jody Cross, interviewed by author, January 11, 2014.

\textsuperscript{60} Daniel Henderson, interviewed by author, January 12, 2014.

community.” There is room in the modern evangelical hymnal to have more songs composed with a corporate congregational mindset, reminding the people believers that a church’s worship response is a communal response.

5. **Songs that are singable, specifically fitted for the needs of an individual congregation**

All five pastors interviewed are of the opinion there is a need for more singable songs within the evangelical churches modern hymnals. Although a bit subjective to each individual setting, the pastors agree there is need for songwriters to know their congregations’ musical abilities, cultural boundaries and theological understanding. Sometimes what is singable for a congregation in Chicago may not work for a congregation in Kansas City. Song selection is frequently determined by demographics, age, and exposure to music.

Commercial pop music differs in melodic and rhythmic complexities than traditional hymns. The average churchgoer who has listened to today’s pop music has grown-up in a music environment that is far more complex than compositions in the hymnal sung by previous generations. Even though some have become accustomed to complex compositions, careful consideration still must be taken to craft congregational songs with a degree of simplicity making them accessible and easy to learn.

One parameter of congregational music different than commercial music is related to key. Unlike other genres of music, when composers are writing for their church congregation, they must consider the range of their song because they are writing for the vocal range of many people, not one individual. Worship songwriters help the congregation engage when they set their melodies where it is easy for *everyone* in the congregation to sing them. Dr. Henderson says,

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Songs need to be singable, but not overly repetitive. Both the key in which they are written and just the singability of the music will be vital so that it is not overly simplistic and in a sense probably boring to the singers, but at the same time not overly complex so that it’s really hard for people to really learn the song. I think the ability to sing songs in terms of music that can really engage the soul is important. Sometimes they are so complex that the average person in the pew just can’t engage with it.63

Mr. Dugard agrees with Dr. Henderson adding the distinction between effective congregational worship songs and performance songs, both of which he asserts can have a place in a worship service,

I would add that worship songs should have a great melody. They should flow and be singable…There’s some songs that are great performance songs, there’s some songs that are great congregationally and knowing the difference is the key. I mean, I hear so often people are visiting other churches and say, “the music was off the charts – so good – but it was so performance based and not singable, and so I don’t really feel like I worshipped.”64

Mr. Moore suggests the ability to write singable songs is what sets aside amateur songwriters from those who have honed their craft,

I think it’s got to be singable. You know, I think this is what separates good songwriters from those who are sort of rookies or aspiring artists. I think that those who can write songs that are easily sung are the ones that will be sung…I believe that’s a skill-set that can be learned through mentorship and through education.65

Mr. Kauflin discusses the value in worship leaders choosing songs that their church can sing opposed to songs that show off the worship leader’s artistic and vocal abilities:

It’s not that you’re supposed to sound your best. It that the congregation is supposed to sound the best. . .sing songs that they want to sing. . .that means, find song that have good melodies. . .find songs that have interesting, inspiring melodies. . .sing melodies that have people go away singing them. . .they’re easy to remember. Easy to learn, hard to forget.”66

63 Daniel Henderson, interviewed by author, January 12, 2014.
64 Todd Dugard, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.
Dr. Cross sums up what makes a good song for the church by saying: “Ultimately a good song for the local church is one that God is all over, so the Spirit is in it, behind it, has birthed it and people respond to it and you can see the face that people grab onto that song.”

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Chapter Five – Songwriting in the Evangelical Community: Needs in Academia

Dr. Chuck Fromm, Mr. Rory Noland, Mr. David Hahn and Ms. Tanya Riches were interviewed for the purpose of determining songwriting needs in the Christian academic community. The following questions were asked of each professor:

a) What are some of the deficiencies you see in the currently available trade books and resources on congregational songwriting? What are they lacking?
b) How do students most effectively learn to write music for their local congregation? What specific exercises or methods are particularly effective with students you have taught?
c) Is there a need to truly train songwriters? Is songwriting a craft that can be taught or is it something more “caught”? In your experience as an educator, what are some common areas of training a fledgling congregational songwriter needs to know that are not often intuitive?
d) What are some specific benefits of an academic-level based textbook and curriculum for congregational songwriting? If such a specific resource were available, would it be something you would use with your students?
e) What are some of the educational benefits to educating students on songwriting using a textbook as opposed to a lecture-only approach?

Four needs in songwriting pedagogy may be applied to the academic community:

1. An all-inclusive textbook instructing how to write corporate, congregational worship songs

Of the songwriting resources available, many of them only provide basic instruction. Ms. Riches, a songwriter and lecturer on the subject comments:

I haven’t really integrated any book on songwriting that’s come from a Christian perspective, I haven’t been impressed by what I’ve read. I think with the secular stuff, it’s very pragmatic, so you know—here are the pieces of what a song is and how to put it together. . .everyone wants to sell their formula and I think that’s such a trap for songwriters who are already trying to navigate the business aspect of it.68

Mr. Hahn, professor of songwriting at Liberty University, goes further and adds that books currently on the market propagate one author’s take on how to write songs:

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68 Tanya Riches, interviewed by author, January 7, 2014.
Books that are available to us act as though they are the authority on songwriting, and they are not. They are really just the authority as to how they write songs. And although they’re published, they’re published within a specific-a very specific market.\(^{69}\)

Mr. Hahn later suggests that one of the greatest deficiencies in songwriting books is that they fail at instructing students how to take the basic building blocks of songwriting and use them in a way to create meaningful art for the corporate church:

How is it that the individual is supposed to process all those details themselves and put together in a logical fashion that has – and bears meaning and authenticity for them as writers instead of always writing someone else’s way? That would be my take on the deficiency.\(^{70}\)

Unlike videos and lectures, a textbook offers benefits to students unique to print. Mr. Noland observes the benefit of a textbook:

A textbook makes sure the instructor is being interpreted accurately….you can keep going back to it as a reference and I think that’s the great thing a textbook offers. It’s a resource you can keep going back to whereas a lecture, you know, you’ve got your notes to depend on but you can’t go back to the lecture unless you have it recorded.\(^{71}\)

Dr. Fromm, editor and chief of *Worship Leader Magazine*, makes a similar comment on the value of a textbook: “The idea of a book-it sort of speeds up the process, organizes it a bit, you get good information that you can store as well and return and learn from.”\(^{72}\)

Finally, Mr. Hahn sees a great value in having a textbook as an instrument that helps reflect-a discipline that is part of being an effective songwriter:

The textbook part is huge because people are able to walk away with something. . .and you can refer to it later. . .part of the whole songwriting thing is reflection. . .why is this important to us? We become self-aware and see our strengths and weaknesses.\(^{73}\)

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\(^{69}\) David Hahn, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.

\(^{70}\) Ibid.

\(^{71}\) Rory Noland, interviewed by author, January 16, 2014.

\(^{72}\) Chuck Fromm, interviewed by author, January 14, 2014.

\(^{73}\) David Hahn, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.
Ms. Riches concurs with Mr. Hahn’s emphasis on reflection noting:

What a textbook does allow for is space for a student to take away and reflect. They can re-read it and go over it allowing them to be educated on their own timeframe. I think that’s definitely a plus.”

2. How to cultivate a “songwriting culture” in churches

Throughout the interview process, participants placed great emphasis on community. It seems as though the days of the solitary composer, writing alone, have all but passed. According to Dr. Fromm, trends seem to indicate church leadership are quickly embracing the values of collaboration or songwriting within community. Songs are now commonly composed by two, three, sometimes four and five artists. An example is seen in Matt Redman’s song, “10,000 Reasons.” There are multiple songwriters, a departure from Matt Redman’s previous body of work. Dr. Fromm supports collaboration noting:

It’s not unusual to see two, three, five songwriters per song or contributing to a song and I think that’s a real healthy thing. To collaborate you have to be connected. You can’t collaborate with anything you’re not connected with. . .the more people you’re actually collaborating with, the more opportunity you have to circulate what you are doing.

No doubt there are plenty of benefits of composing with others, but there has been little instruction on how to go about creating an environment where it is facilitated and encouraged within a church. Mr. Noland addresses the weakness:

One glaring weakness, as far as I’m concerned is how to cultivate-how to help churches cultivate an environment that is conducive to songwriting. I think this is something I haven’t seen written in any place yet. I think a lot of churches-when they get excited about writing their own music, they get excited about trying to capture what God is doing in their churches in song. . .they just want to capture what God is doing their churches and, you know, they have a couple of writers but maybe they don’t know really how to shepherd them or mobilize them to attend to the task of songwriting for the church. And you know, it could be in small groups, it could be a songwriting ministry, but there isn’t

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74 Tanya Riches, interviewed by author, January 7, 2014.

75 Chuck Fromm, interviewed by author, January 14, 2014.
anything out there that I’m aware of that addresses-and tells worship leaders exactly how to go about doing this.

Mr. Noland provides two practical approaches in establishing a songwriting community within a church. There are benefits and challenges to each approach:

1. **Cattle Call Approach.** An approach which opens songwriting up to everyone who is interested in the church. The benefit is that you communicate interest in original music to your congregation. The challenge is that you may have people join who do not have the gift of songwriting.

2. **Small Group Approach.** An approach which invites 2-3 established musicians who have either shown interest in songwriting or have proven themselves as songwriters to be part of a small group that meets to pray, share and explore the idea of collaborative songwriting. The benefit is that it is a much more controlled environment where specific goals can be identified and met. The challenge is managing the perception of a “clique” within the worship ministry if only a few members are invited.\(^76\)

Mr. Noland added further guidelines for collaborative songwriting that help define the group and set healthy boundaries for writing. These include:

a. Give the community a goal to work towards like a song to emphasize a sermon, series or theme.

b. Make your expectations *very* clear (emphasis added). Do not make promises that you do not intend to keep. Protect against the assumption that what the group writes will be used in a service.

c. Decide ahead of time the level at which a song must achieve to be used in a service and if a song is composed that does achieve that level, be willing to take the risk of presenting it to the congregation and allowing them to decide whether or not it has wings to fly.\(^77\)

Ms. Riches also contributes to the subject by speaking of creating a songwriting culture. She is convinced that the most effective songwriting is done within the context of community:

> I think songwriting is done in community, I don’t think it’s done by a teacher-to-student relationship. I think it’s done from being inside these collectives. . .I struggle with the training, the idea of one-one facilitator to a group of 50 songwriters who are all learning how to use building blocks-it just to me doesn’t end up in having the fruitful results that you would have perhaps if you just did

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\(^76\) Rory Noland, interviewed by author, January 16, 2014.

\(^77\) Ibid.
life together and wrote songs out of this poesies, this creation, this continual beauty making.78

3. The value of “local theology” and how to write in that context

Stemming directly from communal songwriting is the concept of “local theology.” Dr. Fromm presents the idea that every congregation has its own theology or “song.” Dr. Fromm believes many songwriting books have ignored the importance of theology,

I think that the biggest failure of songwriting textbooks is not so much on technique, but more on the function of songs and in the community. . .the biggest lack of understanding is the connection between theology and worship and music. To be a worshipping church you need a theological understanding. . .when I say that all theology is local, what that means is, in reality, what is being practiced by the church is not necessarily something that was preached in the seminary. It’s something that is practiced in that congregation. And so local theology is our thoughts about God and his working in us in this community of believers and in our larger communities around us, and ultimately how He has worked with us as a church family.80

Dr. Fromm believes that the abovementioned approach to songwriting may seem foreign when applied to traditional approaches to the creative process. More times than not, songwriters compose songs based on personal experiences and style. While there certainly is a time and place for one person writing one song, collaborative songwriting provides opportunity for groups of people to express in lyric and music how God is working and moving in specific congregations. It is the “unique way God is moving in a congregation” that helps document local theology writers for congregational song should consider their art and craft a ministry to and with others. It is also important to note that local theology is concerned with substance over style. Dr. Fromm explains:

There’s three ways to generalize music; one is style, another is substance and another is situation or the function…local theology is irrespective of style. When we are talking

78 Tanya Riches, interviewed by author, January 7, 2014.
80 Ibid.
about local theology we’re talking about the substance of it, the content of it, and second of all we’re taking about the function of it.\textsuperscript{81}

Composing with local theology in mind places a high focus on lyrical substance. The way in which that substance is expressed is determined by the personality of each congregation, but the stylistic expression becomes secondary to a clear articulation of how God is at work in a particular congregation.

Every congregation has a unique personality, gifts and way about them that sets them apart. Composers who are connected to a church that excels in mercy ministries may find themselves composing songs related to the justice of God and need to reach the poor. Another congregation may excel in preaching and produce songwriters who compose prophetic songs declaring the character of God. Each church is different and the personality of the church is what sets its local theology. Dr. Fromm notes a direct correlation between local theology and the value of original music to a congregation:

\begin{quote}
I think the more that you are connected to the theologizing of a community, the more authentic the songs will be otherwise. . .you might as well live on a hill-on a mountaintop somewhere with your rhyming dictionary-you know-and put out nice sounding songs.\textsuperscript{82}
\end{quote}

Dr. Fromm believes “local theology” gives greater emphasis on the doxological aspects of the songwriter’s worship, causing all to remember the great things God has done:

\begin{quote}
Songs help us to put together the words of God again, to remember them. And in so doing, it’s doxological, it’s a way of thinking about God, helping us to remember and to think and to come to our senses, if you will again, in getting our perspectives corrected about who God is and what He’s done.\textsuperscript{83}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{81} Chuck Fromm, interviewed by author, January 14, 2014.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{83} Chuck Fromm, interviewed by author, January 14, 2014.
In many ways the concept of local theology enables the songwriter to capture, celebrate and remember what God has done within a community of believers. Mr. Hahn adds:

“...We are always doing somebody else’s music. Where is the music that really speaks to the heart of the individual in their context and addressing the seasonal moments of the church and the seasonal moments of their life as well?”

When composers write with local theology in mind, they add value to the unique ways the Lord is moving in their specific congregation and at a specific time or season in their church.

As Dr. Fromm puts it, local theology is “connecting with the people and the lives and the heartbeat of your community.”

4. Proven methods/approaches to songwriting coupled with clear examples and instruction

Whereas some authors have published their particular approach to crafting songs, time and truth walk hand in hand. History frequently demonstrates that there are some basic methods and approaches to composing song that work in any context. Students can learn to write for their local congregation but there are time-tested pedagogical principles that should be part of any songwriting endeavor.

First, Apprenticeship. Dr. Fromm says:

“Work with someone who is effective and if you can’t know them, get to know them by their songs. . .apprenticeship training is when you find a master and connect with them and follow what they are doing. You will develop your own voice soon enough, but learn from the great people you connect with.”

Apprenticeship involves submitting to a higher authority than you, especially when it comes to areas that songwriters may not be trained in such as theology. Dr. Fromm notes,

“I think it’d be wise for a songwriter to have some kind of accountability, person or

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84 David Hahn, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.

85 Chuck Fromm, interviewed by author, January 14, 2014.

86 Ibid.
group – like his local pastor to read, or sing the song or hear the song and judge it, evaluate it.\(^{87}\)

Second, Application Writing. Mr. Hahn says application writing is “the most effective way to do it and they have to write a lot. And so, in my classes what I do is I teach with practice method-praxis.”\(^{88}\) Part of application writing also includes studying melody, learning how to create tension and release in melody, tonal painting-studying how the melody expresses what the lyrics are saying, and knowing how to develop use of other compositional and poetic devices including form, meter, rhyme, metaphor, and simile.\(^{89}\)

Third, Analyzing. Mr. Noland says, “I think the best thing to do is to study some of the great worship songs that are being written and I would actually start a list. . .some of the things that are going to become apparent right away is the song first of all, has a memorable hook, memorable lyrics, fresh lyrics, focused lyrics.”\(^{90}\)

Additionally, Mr. Noland says one of the most important questions a student can ask while analyzing a composition is, “Why does this song work?” When students take time to analyze great music, they quickly come face-to-face with the principles that make great songs work.\(^{91}\)

\(^{87}\) Chuck Fromm, interviewed by author, January 14, 2014.

\(^{88}\) David Hahn, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.

\(^{89}\) Ibid.

\(^{90}\) Rory Noland, interviewed by author, January 16, 2014.

\(^{91}\) Ibid.
Chapter Six – Songwriting in the Evangelical Community: 
Needs in the Christian Music Industry and Marketplace

Five songwriters and four producers were selected as participants for the purpose of determining songwriting needs in the Christian Music Industry (CMI) and Marketplace (MP).

The songwriters include Mr. Don Marsh, Ms. Lorie Marsh, Ms. Twila Paris and Mr. Paul Baloche. The songwriters were asked the following questions:

a) When taking an inventory of today’s congregational worship music, do you see any deficiencies? If so, what are the songs lacking?
b) Can the craft of songwriting be an academic study? Have you ever benefitted from any books written on the craft of songwriting? If so, which ones, and how did they help you in the development of your craft?
c) What are some ideas or concepts pertaining to congregational songwriting amateur songwriters need to learn about congregational music?
d) Are there any songwriting exercises that you have put into practice that would be worth including as academic exercises in a congregational songwriting textbook?
e) Do songwriters have a place in church culture? If so, what do you this should look like? How should their talents be used and crafted within church culture? Please share some of your experiences.

The four producers selected were: Mr. Keith Smith, Mr. Mike Harland, Mr. Adam Lancaster and Mr. Greg Nelson. The producers were asked the following questions:

a) What do songwriters need to know about what makes a good congregational song?
b) Are there any production considerations you take when producing a song written for a church audience that are different than producing a song for another market/genre?
c) How much of the success of a congregational song lies in its DNA in terms of how the melody and lyric and how much of it lies within its presentation or production?
d) As a producer, how do you measure the effectiveness of a song intended for congregational worship?
e) How do you view your role as a producer in relation to songwriters? What does a partnership look like? What advice would you give to songwriters before they begin working with a producer?

Five songwriting needs or common threads for the Christian Music Industry (CMI) and Praise and Worship Marketplace (MP) emerge from the interviews with Songwriters and Producers:
1. Songs that are prayer based, universally identifiable, simple, learnable, authentic, accessible and emotional

Throughout the course of the interview process with songwriters and producers the subject of spiritual and cultural authenticity emerged as an important characteristic and need for congregational worship songs. Ms. Marsh says:

We need songs we can identify with…songs are built out of an authentic relationship… you go through an experience, God teaches you about who He is and then you share that with other people what God showed you about His character and they identify with that, and that’s where the truth is transmitted… I don’t think you can fake it.92

Mr. Baloche suggests that songwriters should cultivate authenticity in their music by crafting songs that are prayer-based: “I would spend more time just trying to sing your prayers, worship God and pay attention to the sincere phrases and expressions that come out of your mouth.”93

Mr. Smith makes a distinction between songs that are written from the commercial, popular market and those written as congregational song. Mr. Smith suggests that congregational songs need to be universally identifiable:

Worship songs need to be universal in terms of what people can comprehend and what people are able to sing, what things people are able to remember…what things are topically universal – understand which ideas alienate people from being able to sing and resonate with a song.94

Mr. Lancaster adds, “they [congregational songs] have to have an emotional quality that moves them.”95 Additionally, any type of music intended to be sung by a group including


93 Paul Baloche, interviewed by author, January 24, 2014.

94 Keith Smith, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.

95 Adam Lancaster, interviewed by author, February 11, 2014.
congregational worship music, should be more simple than complex. Artistic liberties frequently need to be honed in if a song is to remain learnable and memorable to untrained vocalists. Mr. Harland says:

> There are a lot of production considerations when you’re producing for a congregation opposed to an artist. Usually with an artist or a professional performing group, you’re recording them you let them express the complexities of their virtuosity, but a congregation on the other hand, you’ve got to reign that in to the degree that most congregations will be able to succeed with it.\(^6\)

Ms. Paris concurs by stating, “I think most people understand intuitively that congregational songs need to be simpler – there needs to be a level of simplicity.\(^7\)

Three characteristics of congregational song, provided by Mr. Smith, help make worship song accessible for the Christian Music Industry and Praise and Worship Marketplace:

a) Effective use of repetition.
b) Effective use melodic and lyrical contrast.
c) Conscious awareness of range – placing a melody where others can sing it comfortably.\(^8\)

2. Songs whose lyrics are economic and equally as strong as the melodies they are married to and that show (not tell) things that the evangelical church, collectively wants to say to God.

The concept of showing and not telling is not foreign to the craft of songwriting, yet it has frequently been omitted or at least understated in the few available texts on Christian songwriting. Telling is plainly communicating an idea with little use of poetic devices. It is simple and straight to the point. Conversely, showing is making use of poetic devices to communicate an idea in an emotion way. Some of the most effective lyrics are those that make use of effective poetic devices in as few of words as possible. The is the art of writing

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\(^6\) Mike Harland, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.

\(^7\) Twila Paris, interviewed by author, January 17, 2014.

\(^8\) Keith Smith, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.
economically. Mr. Nelson suggests a number of questions to consider when crafting a lyric and melody:

- a) What is the sonic picture?
- b) Is there tension?
- c) Is there release?
- d) What is the oral picture?
- e) What picture is the lyric painting?
- f) Is there a sense of theatre you are establishing in the minds of your hearers?
- g) Most importantly, what are you saying?\(^99\)

Mr. Nelson’s last question is of great importance as Christian music, including worship music is a genre of music defined by its lyrical content. An active Christian life is a prerequisite in order for any believer to write congregational music with substance. There is often a correlation between the depth of a lyric and the depth of the spiritual life lived by the one who composed it.\(^{100}\)

The content of songs worship songwriters are seeking to “show” should be things that a community of believers collectively wants to say to God.\(^{101}\) Scripture predetermines these things in part because the Word of God gives specific instruction on how to worship Him. When describing what makes an effective worship song, Mr. Marsh says, “they tend to say things we all want to say to God and they tend to do it in an attractive way, and in a way that is memorable and we want to sing them.”

Finally, an interview with Mr. Harland revealed that a great composition is the marriage between a convincing lyric and an infectious melody. Both are equally important, but too often novice composers do not want to take the time to do the hard work of ensuring both their melody


\(^{100}\) Ibid.

\(^{101}\) Don Marsh, interviewed by author, January 6, 2014.
and lyric are equally strong. Sometimes “imbalanced” songs are published that depend on the influence of an infectious melody, casting a shadow on a weak lyric. The melodies and lyrics that stand the test of time cast no shadow on each other and equally hold each other up. Mr. Harland explains:

I think the DNA of the song—the melody and the lyrics is really what defines the longevity of a song. The presentation itself will carry only the live experience, but it’s going to be the profound lyric, the memorable and interesting and achievable melody that make a song live generation after generation after generation.”

3. Songs that are produced in a way that helps them “win” with the masses and evoke a corporate response

It is a great responsibility to provide other believers with words to respond to God. Producers frequently see themselves in a supportive role, contributing to the presentation of a song so it “wins” with those who hear it. Mr. Harland describes the supportive role of a producer:

Songwriters should expect a producer that’s acting in some respects like a publisher might even. He’s going to give you feedback even melodically, might even have a suggestion about a chord, might even have a suggestion about a lyric or a syllable that’s landing funny, might even notice something about the structure of the song—a producer can be a songwriter’s best friend. He doesn’t want writing credit. He’s not trying to re-write the song. He’s not trying to take anything away from what you’ve done, but he is trying to producer it in a way that puts the message and the song itself in the very best light.

One of the ways Mr. Nelson ensures a song “wins” with people comes through knowing his ability to be easily swayed by a convincing melody. Mr. Nelson says he first considers the lyric: “I always ask for the lyrics first and the next thing I ask for is just a simple guitar/piano version of the song.” He has learned that a great song stands on its own with or without elaborate arrangement and production.

102 Mike Harland, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.

103 Ibid.
Mr. Smith likens the limitations of congregational worship music and his role in creating songs that “win” to painting a picture:

Knowing where the edge of your canvas is focuses your creativity into the right spots and without edges to your canvas you might end up painting a beautiful picture but its over on the wall and no one is ever going to see it.\(^\text{104}\)

Another opportunity for songs to “win” with the congregation’s to house ideas in ways that are sometimes more memorable than a sermon:

If you can create a melody as the “house” for which it houses theology and ideas, you can send them home with something that will stick far longer than what a message point will…I think that’s a really big opportunity – to understand the opportunity that a melody is representing truths in Scripture.\(^\text{105}\)

Mr. Smith goes on to explain that part of making songs “win” is through production, but that production only adds to a great song on its own:

Production is the packaging around an idea, how to make it compelling. It can also turn people away. That’s what production is. It can support a great song and it can help tear down a great song, but ultimately the success lies in the actual song itself. Take away all the production and you still have a wonderful song if it’s really a wonderful song.\(^\text{106}\)

Mr. Lancaster believes that great corporate worship songs should evoke a response. They are in essence demanding a response from the church and asking them to do something. He paints a broad picture of what these types of worship songs can look like including ones that are sung corporately and others that are sung “over” a congregation and presented to God by an artist in a worshipful way on behalf of the congregation:

They (the congregation) need to respond to it. That does not necessarily mean they’re singing all the time with it. There are times where performers and worship leaders are leading people and the song goes to a level where they become the collective voice of the

\(^{104}\) Keith Smith, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.

\(^{105}\) Ibid.

\(^{106}\) Ibid.
people. The people may or may not be singing along but their voice becomes voiced by
the artist-he’s expressing the heard of the congregation in a way that the congregation
itself cannot do. That elicits a response and a lot of times people will sing along or even
stand.”107

4. Songs that remediate past meaningful worship compositions

One of the greatest things modern worship composers have contributed to church music
is the remediating of traditional texts and tunes that have been cherished by the church for
centuries. Examples are seen in Chris Tomlin’s chorus, “My Chains are Gone” added to
“Amazing Grace”, and in Hillsong Church’s “Cornerstone” that sets the lyrics of the hymn, “The
Solid Rock” to a new tune. These interviews revealed that the remediating of these treasured
songs provide opportunity for rediscovery by a new audience.

In addition to the spiritual and historical benefits of remediating past hymns and worship
songs, Mr. Marsh states that there is a large body of text and tunes in the public domain waiting
to be rediscovered by contemporary worship composers,

There are models like writing a new tune to an existing text, taking a great poem that has
been around or a great Scripture passage, but I think also, taking as Tomlin did with
“Amazing Grace”-writing a chorus but using the original song. The one I really love is
“Glorious Day” where older people hear the familiar strains of a verse from a song and
younger people don’t know it’s older and there is a lot of new to it; the tune is new. So I
think there are a lot of gems of old songs. 1922 is the barrier. If it’s written before 1922
or including 1922, it’s public domain.108

Worship songwriters have a treasure-trove of century old texts and tunes that are waiting to be
remediated and re-discovered again by the Christian Music Industry (CMI) and evangelical
church. In addition to tunes, Mr. Marsh also notes song titles cannot be copyrighted and so
therein lies another opportunity for songwriters to take a strong title and write a fresh


composition that perhaps offers a different direction than the previous song written with that title.\(^{109}\)

In addition to providing the CMI, MP and evangelical church with additional material for their lexicons, the remediating of past texts and tunes is an act of remembering. It draws ties the evangelical church’s background and connects the church of today with those who have gone before.

5. *Songs that can be easily replicated by average musicians within the many varying avenues of the Christian Music Industry and Marketplace infrastructure.*

The CMI and MP have been largely saturated by worship songs. The expanse of the CMI and MP has provided numerous avenues for worship songs to be realized in a multitude of ways. Whereas in previous generations, church music was reserved for congregational experiences, it is not uncommon for Sunday’s music to be on the radio and carry with it commercial appeal. It comes by no surprise then that research revealed a need for simple, attainable music for the CMI and MP. More than before, many churches want to reproduce songs they hear on Christian radio and use them as corporate expressions. Sometimes it involves rearranging the melody, key and song structure so it attainable.\(^{110}\)

Emerging from the interviews is the need for songwriters to keep their songs simple. Mr. Smith notes that, “effective producers need to understand that worship songs are built to be done live with a congregation so a lot of my arrangements for worship recordings are very much built around ‘can a worship band play these things and can they be replicated in a way that five people could do this?’”\(^{111}\) Mr. Harland also stands with Mr. Smith’s assertion,

\(^{109}\) Don Marsh, interviewed by author, January 6, 2014.


\(^{111}\) Keith Smith, interviewed by author, January 20, 2014.
When producing an artist like Tommy Walker we’re not worried about writing rhythms that are too complex. We’re not worried about a guitar riff that is not playable by Tommy because he’s a virtuoso guitarist but if I was producing for a congregation, I’d be very mindful of church musicians. Will they be able to play this? Will they be able to sing this? Are the rhythms something an artist could pull off but challenging for a congregation to do or even a choir to do? You know, a soloist can sing a rhythm much more intricately and do a lot of vocal turns and runs vocally. It would be impossible for even a choir to reproduce that, much less a congregation.
Chapter Seven – Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the need for an academic-based congregational worship songwriting manual for the evangelical community. The need has been established by: 1) Citing the deficiency of currently available published books, dissertations and theses on the subject; 2) Examining the Biblical precedence for songwriting in the Scripture and, 3) Examining the need for congregational songs in the church, academia, Christian Music Industry and market place.

Chapter two is a comparative analysis of existing resources (books and dissertations/theses) currently available on the subject of songwriting. Conclusions indicate that there has not been research on the subject of songwriting pedagogy and the need for a songwriting manual.

Chapter three is an analysis of songwriting in the Scriptures. Special attention is given to strategic songwriters from the Old and New Testaments. The conclusion is that music in the Scriptures is for five specific purposes: 1) To capture significant moments of history that preserve the work of God; 2) To facilitate songs of God with a language common to all the people; 3) To encourage and edify the church; 4) To provide doctrinal and Scriptural education; and, 5) To evangelize unbelievers.

Chapter four is the data gathered from interviews with pastors. These professionals provide insight into the songwriting needs within evangelical churches across North America. From their insights concepts for songwriting pedagogy emerge. Some of these include the need to develop a songwriting “voice” as a local congregation, development of historical appreciation, commitment to accurate grammar, theology and clarity of lyric, strategic partnerships,
prescriptive writing, utilizing material in the Public Domain, and composing from a corporate perspective.

Chapter five is a collection of ideas and thoughts that further present the need for a clearly defined songwriting pedagogy according to the needs in academia. These professionals exemplify some of the songwriting educational authorities represented within the evangelical community. Some of the principles gathered from these men and women include the need for a songwriting manual, environments where songwriting goals are set and obtained, opportunities to be actively involved in a Christian community, clear teaching on “local theology” and how to write songs with it in mind, exposure to significant past and present worship songs and the need for amateur songwriters to seek out a mentor.

Chapter six deals information gathered from two different groups: The first, songwriters; the second, producers. Some of the principles gathered from these professionals include the need for songs that reflect universal experiences, an appreciation for hymns and hymnology, journal keeping, economical lyric writing, the value and proper use of production/arranging technique, and a basic understanding of copyright law and how are royalties are earned.

Conclusions – Practical Principles for Songwriting Pedagogy

1) Needs in the Church. The church needs songwriters who:
   a) Edify the local body, specifically responding to what God is doing in their particular congregation.
   b) Are committed to the church.
   c) Have a historical appreciation of where their church has come from.
   d) Are committed to the study of theology and accurate grammar.
   e) Are committed to clarity in their lyrics.
   f) Write prescriptively.
   g) Remediate material in the public domain.
   h) Compose corporate songs with plural pronouns.
   i) Write songs that emphasize community.
   j) Write songs that are sensitive to the limitations of a congregation.
   k) Critique and evaluate the appropriateness of their songs for congregational worship.
l) Seek out a community of other writers with whom they can collaborate and receive honest feedback.
   Actively seek to partner with the vision of their lead pastor.

**Conclusion – Practical principles for Songwriting Pedagogy**

2) *Needs in Academia.* Research demonstrates that needs in the church differ from those in academia. Academia needs a songwriting manual that:

   a) Organizes songwriting curricula in a logical, structured sequenced format.
   b) Encourages comprehension through exercises and assignments.
   c) Promotes principles over style.
   d) Addresses the need to cultivate a songwriting culture in the local church.
   e) Promotes an active church and community life.
   f) Defines and endorses local theology.
   g) Develops an appreciation for historicity.
   h) Encourages songwriting mentoring and provides a checklist of qualities to look for in a mentor.
   i) Contains timeless and current compositions for analysis and discussion.
   Has an accompanying listening list of songs that exemplify principles taught.

**Conclusion – Practical principles for Songwriting Pedagogy**

3. *Needs in the CMI and MP.* The CMI and MP needs songwriters who:

   a) Write songs reflective of universal experiences.
   b) Study hymnology to expose themselves to simple, singable song form.
   c) Keep a journal to record their thoughts and prayers.
   d) Expose themselves to songs that ‘show’ not ‘tell’.
   e) Study and practice the economy of lyric writing.
   f) Cultivate an active and vibrant life in Christ demonstrative of spiritual depth.
   g) Write corporate worship songs that elicit a response.
   h) Value production as a way to enhance to what is already a great composition.
   i) Actively pursue relationships with producers/arrangers.
   j) Develop an appreciation of Christian/church music history.
   k) Discipline themselves by remediating a strophic poem or hymn text.
   l) Study lyric meter and song form.
   m) Produce their music in a way that’s accessible to average musicians.
   n) Consider the breadth of avenues in the CMI and MP for their music to be realized and released.
   o) Take an interest in understanding the administrative mechanics of the music industry.
The Need for a Congregational Songwriting Manual

Following these conclusions, it is apparent there is need for a songwriting manual in the evangelical community that addresses the above mentioned needs in the church, academia, Christian Music Industry and Marketplace. A songwriting manual is needed that: 1) does not propagate one specific method or approach to songwriting, 2) provides principles of songwriting, 3) leaves room for diversity, and 4) demonstrates songwriting principles and technique from trusted composers. The author envisions a 400-page academic textbook purposed for Christian institutions seeking to teach congregational songwriting. Combined with interactive multimedia including a website, teaching videos and digital curriculum for professors, the author sees the resource tied to a static book while the content is presented, distributed and engaged in through a variety of multimedia sources.

The proposed resource would consist of ten chapters. The first chapter would explain why worship songs are needed in tandem with the Biblical foundations for worship songwriting. It would also focus on the role of a worship songwriter as a theologian and the weight of that responsibility.

Chapter two would be about relationships. It would discuss finding the “voice” of a congregation, the importance of being in relationship with others in a Christian community, developing a historic appreciation of what God has done in a congregation, how to develop a songwriting culture, and how to write prescriptively according to the needs a church body.

Chapter three would focus on song form and design. It would argue how the human mind has been designed for order and how songwriters create order out of chaos. It would discuss the need for a strong “hook” or chorus, while explaining some of the most common song
forms used in congregational worship music. It would conclude with a section on how and when to break the rules of song form.

Chapter four would concentrate on the mechanics of lyric writing. Its focus would be on accurate grammar, the economy of lyrics and common poetic devices.

Chapter five would concentrate on the mechanics of melody writing. Its focus would be on building effective melodies, the importance of simplicity, use of rhythm, meter and contrast, and the crucial task of marrying an infectious melody to an *equally* convincing lyric.

Chapter six would be on inspiration. It would include the discipline of keeping a journal and becoming an active listener to capture ideas from every source imaginable. It would also discuss the discipline of facilitating inspiration through self-awareness. Other topics discussed in would include how to write about experiences that are universal to all people, how to develop transparency as a songwriter, developing music appreciation and through that, and using great songs as templates for new ones.

Chapter seven would discuss remediation. It would include the value of rediscovering music from the past and how to create new songs by adding to or re-arranging old ones. It would conclude with a section validating “mash-ups” and remixes as viable song creations.

Chapter eight would be dedicated to production: the values and dangers of production, producing a song in an accessible way for your audience, and the songwriter-producer relationship.

Chapter nine would be a section on how to evaluate congregational worship songs. It would be framed by an argument for good art and bad art. It would discuss the congregation’s role in deciding if a song works or not and contain a checklist of items for songwriters to consider before they present their songs.
The final chapter would be on song promotion and copyright. It would present the value of having a publisher to promote songs as well as the basics every worship songwriter should know about copyright law and how royalties are earning in the Christian Music Industry.

The book would also contain a number of appendices including: How to carefully choose appropriate songs for congregational worship, 50 hymns and modern worship songs for study and analysis, songwriting exercises, and 25 Bible verses every worship songwriter should memorize.

While addressing the needs for songwriting in the local church, academia and the Christian Music Industry and Marketplace, the authority of the proposed manual would rest on existing and future interviews with notable songwriters, educators, pastors and producers. It would seek to unify the evangelical community around the topic of songwriting by teaching principles and style. The research already completed and documented in previous chapters would provide a foundation for the manual envisioned. An outline for the proposed resource titled, *The Worship Songwriter’s Manual* is provided as Appendix D.

In addition to making the case for the Biblical Foundations for songwriting, six areas of for songwriting pedagogy are suggested, including: The Relationship of Song, Song Form and Design, The Mechanics of Congregational Lyric Writing, The Mechanics of Congregational Melody Writing, Inspiration: Where It Comes From and How to Capture It, Remediation: The World of Public Domain, Production: Enhancing What is Already Good, Evaluating Your Songs, and Song Promotion and Copyright.

*Future Research*

Whereas the breadth of the project covers much ground in terms of demonstrating the need for a songwriting manual, future research would be required to flesh out the content and
address some other pertinent principles that are not addressed. Below is a list of areas that are not covered in this project that might be considered in the proposed resource.

a) The study of music in other cultures-Further research is needed to understand how the principles concluded can be appropriately and effectively applied in other cultures. Different cultures make use of different musical pedagogies and systems. Whereas the concluding principles may be true for other cultures, their application may be much different.

b) Inductive Song Form Analysis-Attention needs to be given to the most commonly used song forms as well as creative extensions and variations. It should involve a more accurate picture of the types of songs that best serve the local church, CMI and MP. A starting place might be through more concentrated research into the song form of CCLI’s top 25 list and CCM’s list of the most successful songs in the CMI and MP.

c) Inductive Production Analysis-A more descriptive picture of how successful songs for the CMI and MP are produced could be established through further inductive research. The importance of having vocals “out front” in the mix and having song durations less than five minutes might be argued with further research.

d) The Journey of a Song-There is a need for further research into how a song for any of the proposed markets is crafted, the timeline it takes and the creative process of crafting a melody and lyric. Areas to be covered may include the range of an effective melody, the effective use of intervallic jumps to conjure certain emotions, and the stages of lyric writing including the use of “placement” lyrics that may hold a sense of rhythm, meter and vowel sound until a final lyric is decided upon.
e) Poetic Devices-Future research needs to examine the effective use of meter, rhyme, simile, metaphor and other English language writing tools used to craft effective lyrics. Analysis of how these devices are present in CCLI’s list of top 25 songs sung in churches would be a good place to start.

f) Product Demand and Marketing Research-Targeted research is needed to establish whether there is a viable market for the proposed resource. It would need to evaluate the usefulness and viability of multimedia format needs including audio books, interactive website, online curriculum, instructional videos and so on.

g) Application According to Instrument-Future research is needed on how the principles of songwriting pedagogy are applied and understood according to the instrumentation of each individual student. It is commonly understood that there are differences that arise from composing on different instruments. These need to be researched, addressed and articulated before the proposed resource is written.

h) The Life of a Song-Additional research is needed on the life of a song. Specifically, the commonalities of songs that have stood the test of time. It would involve a deeper examination of hymnology to discover the common traits of songs (both melodic and lyrical) that are evident in century-old compositions.

i) Market Trends-With the dissolving infrastructure of the Christian Music Industry and Marketplace used over the past 40 years, more research is needed to establish a sense of the new infrastructure coming into place. More than ever, artists and publishers have been forced to establish new innovative ways to both distribute music and obtain revenue from it. Those wishing to compose for the CMI/MP, or even the local
church, need to be aware of these changes and how they can best make their music available to others.


Cross, Jody. “Release the Song - Why People Don't Sing in Church.” Lecture, First Baptist Church, Orillia, Ontario, Canada, November 2012.


Moss, Phyllis Anita. 2001. The role of the praise and worship leader: A model for preparing the singer for leadership in contemporary worship. ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing.


Noland, Rory. Interview by author. Phone interview. Chicago, Illinois, USA, January 16, 2014


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A - VITA

VITA
Travis Reginald Joseph Doucette

PERSONAL
Born: October 1, 1981

EDUCATIONAL
B.Th., Emmanuel Bible College, 2005.
B.S. in Music and Worship, Liberty University, 2009.
M.A. in Worship Studies, Liberty University, 2010.

PROFESSIONAL
Interim Music Director, Harvest Bible Chapel, Barrie, 2010.
Interim Music Director, Harvest Bible Chapel, Oakville, 2003.
Interim Music Director, Harvest Bible Chapel, Markham (York Region), 2005.
Adjunct Instructor of Music and Worship Studies, Liberty University, 2010-12.
Owner and Operator, Retrobox Media Transfers, 2013-present.

PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES
Member, American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, 2007-present.
APPENDIX B – IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Dear Travis,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases are attached to your approval email.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling (434) 592-4054
APPENDIX C – SURVEY QUESTIONS

Survey Questions – Pastors:
1. What does the Bible say about songwriting? Is songwriting important to God? Is there a role for songwriters to play in the local church body? If so, what is it?
2. From your perspective, what are the characteristics of an effective congregational song? What makes it appropriate lyrically and musically?
3. How do you think songwriters could be used in conjunction specifically with your preaching/teaching ministry? Is there a potential partnership there?
4. What are some benefits music has in communicating truth that are different than preaching/teaching? What benefits could effective songwriters bring to the worship atmosphere at your church?
5. Based on both well-composed and not-so-well composed congregational songs you have been exposed to, as a pastor/teacher, what instruction would you want to give songwriters as they compose worship expressions for your congregation?

Survey Questions – Educators:
1. What are some of the deficiencies you see in the currently available trade books and resources on congregational songwriting?
2. How do students most effectively learn to write music for their local congregation? What specific exercises or methods are particularly effective with the students you teach?
3. Is there a need to train songwriters? Is songwriting a craft that can be taught or is it something more “caught”? In your experience as an educator, what are some common areas of training a fledgling congregational songwriter needs to know that are not often intuitive?
4. What are some specific benefits of an academic-level based text and curriculum for congregational songwriting? If such a specific resource were available, would it be something you would use with your students?
5. What are some of the educational benefits to educating students on songwriting using a textbook as opposed to a lecture-only approach?

Survey Questions – Songwriters and Producers:
1. When taking an inventory of today’s congregational worship music, do you see any deficiencies? If so, what are the songs lacking?
2. Can the craft of songwriting be an academic study? Have you ever benefitted from any books written on the craft of songwriting? If so, which ones, and how did they help you in the development of your craft?
3. What are some ideas or concepts pertaining to congregational songwriting amateur songwriters need to learn?
4. Are there any songwriting exercises that you have put into practice that would be worth including as academic exercises in a congregational songwriting textbook? Do songwriters have a place in church culture? If so, what do you think it should look like? How should their talents be used and crafted within church culture? Please share some of your experiences.
APPENDIX D – Outline for The Worship Songwriter’s Manual

The Worship Songwriter’s Manual:
How to Write Songs the Church will Sing

Introduction:
  a) Why Write Worship Songs?
     a. Revelation and Response: Starting Points
     b. What Makes a Great Worship Song?
     c. Why Style Should Always Yield to Substance
     d. Keeping the End Goal in Sight: God’s Looking for Worshippers, not Songwriters
  b) The Biblical Foundations For Worship Songwriting
     a. Songwriters in the Bible
     b. Songs in the Bible
     c. The Purpose of Songwriting in the Scriptures
  c) What We Sing is What We Teach: Why Theology Matters
     a. The Theological Responsibilities of a Worship Songwriter
     b. The Power of Writing the Word of God Into Your Songs
     c. Avoiding Bad Theology With Good Accountability

The Relationship of Song:
  a) Finding the “Voice” of Your Congregation
     a. Every Church has a Different Personality
     b. Every Church has Different Needs
     c. Every Church has Different Abilities
  b) Birthing Songs Out of Relationship With Your Congregation
     a. The Servanthood of Songwriting:
        i. The Crossroads of Artistry and Ministry
        ii. Songwriting Simplicity: Writing and Arranging Songs That Make it Easy for Your Church to Enter Into Worship.
     b. The Value of Rooting Your Songwriting Ministry in the Local Church
     c. Local Theology: How to Capture What God’s Doing in Your Church
     d. Partnering With Your Pastor: Crafting Songs That Serve His Vision
     e. Prescriptive Writing: Addressing the Needs of Your Church
  c) Anchoring the Future in the Past: Developing a Historical Perception
     a. Forging the Future by Preserving the Past
  d) How to Develop a “Songwriting Culture” at Your Church
  e) How to Find and Choose a Songwriting Mentor

Song Form and Design:
  a) Designed for Order: Bringing Organization Out of Chaos
  b) Building Your Song Around a Relentless “Hook”
  c) Common Congregational Song Forms:
     a. Strophic (AAA)
     b. Verse-Chorus
  d) How and When to Break the Rules
The Mechanics of Congregational Lyric Writing:
   a) Accurate Grammar Matters
   b) The Economy of Lyrics: Writing Simply, Clearly in as Few Words as Possible
      a. Words to Avoid: Weightless Words
      b. Words to Cutout: Extraneous Verbiage
   c) Poetic Devices for Congregational Lyric Writing
      a. Lyrical Writing is Neither Poetry or Prose
         i. Rhyme: Perfect and Imperfect
         ii. Making Your Syllables Count
         iii. Metaphor and Simile
         iv. Less of “Me”, More of “We”: Learning to Write From a Corporate Perspective
         v. “Showing” Verses “Telling” in Lyric Writing
         vi. The Value of Emphasizing Community in Your Content
         vii. Writing With a Response in Mind

The Mechanics of Congregational Melody Writing:
   a) The Power of an Infectious Melody
   b) Range and Simplicity: The Art of Writing Songs That are Easy to Learn and Hard to Forget
   c) Melodic Principles for Congregational Lyric Writing
      a. Rhythm: Contrast is Key
      b. Meter: Patterns That Work
   d) Matching Contagious Melodies with Equally Convincing Lyrics and Why That Matters

Inspiration: Where It Comes From and How to Capture It:
   a) Learning to be a “Ready-Writer”
      a. How to Keep a Songwriting Journal
      b. Capturing the Brilliance Around You: How to Become an Active Listener
   b) Facilitating Inspiration in Your Life: Tapping Into What Moves You
   c) Having an Universal Mindset: Making Your Songs Win by Writing From Experiences and Perspectives Common to Everyone
   d) Developing Transparency and Emotional Intimacy in Your Songs
   e) Learning From the Best:
      a. How to Develop Music Appreciation:
         i. Hymnology: Songs That Stand the Test of Time
         ii. CCM and the Modern Worship Movement
         iii. CCLI: Studying the Songs That Make the Global Church Sing
      b. Carbon-Copy Writing: Using Popular Songs as Templates
Remediation: The Wonderful World of the Public Domain
   a) Rediscovering the Past: The Value of Remediation
   b) Creating Something New Out of Old
      a. Adding Choruses to Strophic Songs
      b. Remixes and “Mash-Ups”

Production: Enhancing What’s Already Tested and Proven:
   a) The Values and Dangers of Production
   b) Accessibility: Determining the Needs of Your Song
   c) The Worship Songwriter-Producer Relationship

Evaluating Your Songs:
   a) Good Art Versus Bad Art
   b) Your Church: The Ultimate Adjudicator
   c) Congregational Songwriter’s Checklist

Song Promotion and Copyright:
   a) Letting Another Man’s Lips Speak Your Praise: The Value of a Publisher and How to Obtain One
   b) Copyright Basics for the Worship Songwriter

Appendix A: How to Carefully and Appropriately Choose Music
Appendix B: 50 Hymns and Modern Worship Songs every Congregational Worship Songwriter Should Study and Analyze (with accompanying MP3 download card)
Appendix C: Songwriting Exercises for Congregational Worship Songwriters
Appendix D: 25 Bible Passages Every Worship Songwriter Should Memorize
APPENDIX E – National Association of Evangelicals’ Statement of Faith

We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.

We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is absolutely essential.

We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.

We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.

We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.
Chapter One: Introduction

- Statement of the problem
  - An adequate resource does not yet exist.
  - Seeking to document the need for a manual for teaching songwriting.

- Statement of limitations
  - Inventory analysis spans 20 years, 1992 - 2012.
  - People interviewed are all professionals working in the evangelical community.
  - Project deals with the need for a manual and is not intended to be a manual itself.
Chapter One: Introduction

• Statement of methodology
  – Skype audio/video interviews with audio transcribed.
  – Cross section of people interviewed according three areas of needs. Interviewees included:
    • Four pastors
    • Four educators
    • Five songwriters
    • Four producers

Chapter Two: Comparative Analysis

• Inventory and analysis of books:
  – Roughly 35 songwriting books published in the last 20 years
  – Analyzed for content related to congregational worship songwriting.

• Inventory and analysis of dissertations and theses:
  – Roughly 20 dissertations and various thesis publications in academic journals.
  – Limited thesis projects to those published during the last 10 years.
  – Evaluated & analyzed works for content related to congregational worship songwriting.
Chapter Three: Biblical Foundations

• Scripture examined for actual use or implied songwriting examples:
  – Specific attention given to Biblical characters in Old/New Testaments who are identified as songwriters.
  – Additional attention given to the book of Psalms, the largest volume of songs in Scripture.

• Five specific purposes for Biblical songwriting are derived from the examination of songwriters in the book of Psalms.

Chapter Four: Needs in the Church

• Four pastors were asked four questions specifically related to songwriting for the church (questions in appendix). Common needs were discovered:
  – Songs that chronicle the life of a church and that are born out of community.
  – Songs that are Scripturally based, theologically and grammatically accurate.
  – Songs that serve sermons and the overall vision for each service.
  – Songs written from a corporate, congregational standpoint, not individual perspective.
  – Songs that are singable according to the church’s abilities.
Chapter Five: Needs in Academia

• Four educators were asked five questions specifically related to songwriting instruction in academia (questions in appendix). Common needs were discovered:
  – An “all-inclusive” textbook specifically on how to write corporate songs for the church.
  – Instruction on how to cultivate a “songwriting culture” in a local church.
  – An emphasis on the value of “local theology” and how to write in that context.
  – Proven methods/approaches to songwriting coupled with clear examples and instruction.

Chapter Six: Needs in the Marketplace

• Nine songwriters and producers were asked five questions specifically related to songwriting for the CMI and MP (questions in appendix). Common needs were discovered:
  – Songs that are prayer based, universally identifiable, simple, learnable, authentic, accessible and emotional.
  – Songs whose lyrics are economic and equally as strong as the melodies they are married to and that show (not tell) things that we, the evangelical church, collectively want to say to God.
  – Songs that are produced in a way that helps them ‘win’ with the masses and evoke a corporate response.
  – Songs that remediate past meaningful worship expressions.
  – Songs that can be easily replicated by average musicians.
Chapter Seven: Summary & Conclusion

- Overall conclusion: It is unequivocally apparent that there is a need for a congregational songwriting manual for the evangelical community that addresses the following needs . . .

Principles for Songwriting Pedagogy

- Needs in the Church:
  -- Songwriters who:
    • edify the local body, specifically responding to what God is doing in their particular congregation.
    • are committed to the church.
    • have a historical appreciation of where their church has come from.
    • are committed to the study of theology and accurate grammar.
    • are committed to clarity in their lyrics.
    • actively seek to partner with the vision of their lead pastor.
Principles for Songwriting Pedagogy

• Needs in Academia:
  – A textbook that:
    • organizes songwriting curriculum in a logical, structured format.
    • encourages comprehension through exercises and assignments.
    • promotes principles over style.
    • addresses how to cultivate a songwriting culture.
    • promotes an active church and community life.

Principles for Songwriting Pedagogy

• Needs in the CMI and MP:
  – Songwriters who:
    • write songs reflective of universal experiences.
    • study hymnology to expose themselves to simple, singable song form.
    • keep a journal to record their thoughts and prayers.
    • expose themselves to songs that ‘show’ not ‘tell’.
    • study and practice the economy of lyric writing.
    • cultivate an active and vibrant life in Christ demonstrative of spiritual depth.
    • write corporate worship songs that elicit a response.
    • value production as a way to enhance to what is already a great composition.
Proposed Manual Outline

- Introduction
- The Relationship of Song
- Song Form and Design
- The Mechanics of Congregational Lyric Writing
- The Mechanics of Congregational Melody Writing
- Inspiration: Where It Comes From and How to Capture It
- Remediation: The World of Public Domain
- Production: Enhancing what’s Already Tested and Proven
- Evaluating Your Songs
- Song Promotion and Copyright

Chapter Seven: Summary & Conclusion

- Future research needs to be conducted in the following areas before the proposed manual is written and published:
  - Ethnomusicology.
  - Tested research.
  - Inductive song form analysis.
  - Inductive production analysis.
  - The journey of a song (from pen to publisher).
  - Poetic devices.
  - Product demand and marketing research.
  - Application according to instrument.
  - The life of a song.
  - Market trends.