

## “Informed by the Past” in 2023

### With a Voice of Singing, Bells, and Other Instruments

By Rev. Dr. Newell Williams

I was born on the morning of the first Sunday that my father directed the Sanctuary Choir of the First Christian Church of Tulsa, Oklahoma. My mother, who met my father while both were students at Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey, arrived in Tulsa the day before, having traveled from Richmond, Indiana, where my parents had served their first Ministry of Music at the Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church. Thus, I have been blessed by church music since the very beginning of my life.

Upon arriving at First Christian Church of Tulsa, my parents developed choirs for pre-school, elementary and high school students, as well as adults. Early in their ministry, my father introduced White-chapel Handbells to the congregation. Two handbell choirs were developed, one for high school girls and another for boys whose voices were changing. Thus, as my voice began to change, I joined twelve other boys as a member of the boys' handbell choir.

Along with the choral and handbell choirs, this congregation was blessed by a pipe organ and gifted organist who accompanied the choirs and had a special gift for leading congregational singing. In addition, from time to time, our choirs offered cantatas accompanied by additional musical instruments.

In my college and graduate school years, I served as a student minister in various congregations in Oklahoma, Kansas, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Music varied from one church to another, but in every one of those congregations, music made a positive difference in the worship that I experienced. Among those congregations was the Christian Church in the rural village of Fall River, Kansas, where the congregational singing was accompanied by a piano and violin. In the early years of my student ministry at Vine Street Christian Church of Nashville, Tennessee, the minister of music was none other than the prolific church musician Hal Hopson.

Since completing a Ph.D. in Church History at Vanderbilt University forty some years ago, I have served on the faculty and administration of two theological schools: Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University and Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis. In these two communities, church music has been important to my life. I have known excellent church music programs in both Indianapolis and Fort Worth. However, it is in the past twenty years that I have been a member of University Christian Church in Fort Worth (UCC) that I have experienced a church music program that reminds me of the church music

program that my parents developed some seventy years ago.

I suppose this has something to do with the fact that twenty years ago the director of the choir at UCC had been a member of my father's High School Choir. I learned from him that when he accepted this call, he had called on my father to help him learn how to do the job. In particular, he was interested in developing a Church Music Library. Moreover, twenty years ago, several members of the UCC choir, including the director's spouse, had also been members of my father's High School Choir. In addition, UCC had, and continues to have, outstanding Handbell Choirs. This congregation has also been blessed by outstanding organists and the occasional use of additional instruments.

My father, who had many interests, completed his Ministry of Music at First Christian Church of Tulsa to accept an appointment in the School of Education at Tulsa University. He chose the High School Choir, of which I was a member, to sing the anthem on that last Sunday. Having memorized that anthem as a member of the High School Choir, I can remember parts of it to this day, “With a voice of singing, declare ye this and let it be heard, hallelujah!”

*Rev. Dr. Newell Williams is President Emeritus, Brite Divinity School and CMI Board Member*

## CMI Libraries and Courses: Connecting Past and Present

The CMI libraries are a one-of-a-kind treasure. The choral and organ databases are continually enriched by gifts of music and resources from individuals, churches, and publishers. Church music created through the ages and today is easily accessible by anyone, anywhere, anytime. Beautiful music that accommodates the needs of both highly resourced congregations and small churches can be found in the CMI libraries. Each entry has a PDF sample and full information for ordering. Best of all, hard copies are available at the CMI office in case the music is out of print or an order is delayed.

CMI is delighted to offer another music treasure, courses in cooperation with Brite Divinity School and experts in church music, giving participants an opportunity to study worship practices and accumulated music from centuries of worshipping Christians as they apply today.

### “Committed to the Present” in 2023

#### Online Events:

**January 14** – CMI staff and frequent users shared insights to navigate the CMI libraries.

**January 28** – Prof. Ellen Johnston led the online discussion, “What Every Church Musician Needs to Know No Course Ever Taught Us.”

**February 4** – Fr. Michael Joncas probed his collection of Lenten hymns. A random drawing for his hymnal delighted recipients!

**February 11** – Rev. Kathryn Johnson presented “Lent: Borrowing the Language of Bach’s Passion/the Organ Chorales.”

**February 18** – Ms. Joanne Werner offered a session on choral and vocal techniques.

**March 18** – Professors Ellen Johnston and Bill Roberts discussed musicians and clergy working together.

**March 25** – Dr. James Abbington gave highlights of African American Choral Music.

**April 22** – Rev. Kathryn Johnson explored “The Artistic Language of Hildegard von Bingen.”

**April 29** – Dr. James Abbington opened the door for “Organ Music of Black Composers”

**June** – Musician/scholars gathered to discuss topics in congregational song.

**September 16** – Tour of the CMI Libraries highlighting upcoming seasons.

**September 30** – Rev. Kathryn Johnson explored planning for All Saints services in “The Languages of the Saints: Finding the Expressions of their Voices.”

#### In-Person Events:

**August 4-8** – Annual Summer Intensive plus retreat for Early Career Church Musicians

**October 6-8** – Workshops with British composer/conductor Bob Chilcott culminating with “A Wesleyan Hymn Festival” at Highland Park United Methodist Church, Dallas, Access festival video here: <https://online.brushfire.com/hpumc/events/qt7dk7vw7c>

**November 9** – “A Day of Singing” with Dr. Tim Sharp





## “Preparing for the Future” in 2023

### MUSIC AND LITURGY WILL SAVE THE CHURCH: A BOLD PROPOSAL

By Charlotte Kroeker

Of course music and liturgy will not save the church. That is God’s bailiwick, hardly in our control no matter how much we care about the church. However. . .

With every major positive shift in the church, music has been an important part of lasting change. For example, if we view a few high points in church history we see lasting theological and structural change and music that is still a treasured part of worship today.

- Worship in the Old Testament is rich with the Psalms and admonitions to “Sing to the Lord”
- Beginnings of the Christian church are accompanied by the canticles in the New Testament followed by early hymns such as the Phos Hilaron (c. 200) and “Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence” and “Of the Father’s Love Begotten” from the 4th c.
- Central to the Reformation are the chorales of Martin Luther (A Mighty Fortress) and the practice of Psalm singing with the Genevan tunes (OLD 100th for the Doxology). J.S. Bach’s music emerged from this context.
- In early 18th c. England, Isaac Watts invigorated worship by providing metric settings of the Psalms such as Psalm 90, “Our God, Our Help in Ages Past.”
- Music was central to the work of the Wesleys who knew its power to change hearts (“Love Divine, All Loves Excelling”)
- The Oxford Movement of the 1800’s brought back the inspiration, beauty, mystery and tradition of earlier writers and musicians. Catherine Winkworth emerged as a translator for hymns like “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty.”
- Ralph Vaughn Williams compiled The English Hymnal, 1906, a hymnal with significant texts and singable tunes, many based on folk music, prefacing the collection by saying, “Good taste is a moral rather than a musical issue.”
- The Second Vatican Council of 1962-65 inspired not only Catholic liturgists and musicians but also the liturgy and music of all Protestant denominations as well. From this time we are grateful for the practice of responsorial Psalmody, pervasive across denominations for congregational song today.
- Spirituals originating from the lives of enslaved people are commonplace in contemporary worship.

That music could change the church is a concept articulated by J.S. Bach and the Wesleys:

- “To the honor of the most high God alone, to the neighbor, that he may learn from it.” J.S. Bach, on the title page of the Orgelbüchlein.
- “That this part (i.e., the musical part) of Divine Worship may be the more acceptable to God, as well as the more profitable to yourself and others. . .” Prefatory sentence to John Wesley’s Directions for Singing of 1761.

As Fr. Michael Ryan, steeped in the reforms of Vatican II, would say many years later, “. . .music is integral to everything we do as church: music forms us and shapes us, it uplifts and consoles us, it gladdens our hearts and revives our drooping spirits. (January 12, 2007, Dallas, Texas)

It is no accident that great leaders of the church have understood the power of music as a vehicle to “love God with all our heart and mind and our neighbor as ourselves,” and motivate us to “do to others as we would have them do to us.”

It also is not surprising that the Biblical command “Sing to the Lord” is borne out in findings of neuroscience that show we remember longer what we sing than what we hear or say. Nor should the results of a Chorus America study surprise us: 80% of choirs in the U.S. are religious choirs and choral singers are better citizens when measured by community service, frequency of voting, charitable giving, volunteer work. Remind you of the fruits of the spirit of Philippians? (continued next page)

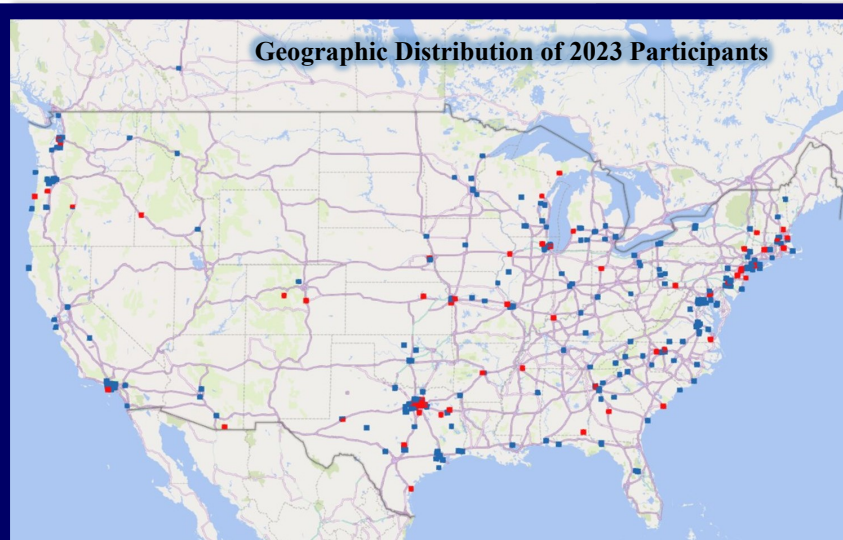


## Music and Liturgy...continued

Recently, Rabbi Wolpe, emeritus of Sinai Temple in NYC, reflected on his years that taught him about the human condition and the essential place religion plays: “Sometimes it seems, for those outside of faith communities, that religion is simply about a set of beliefs to which one assents. But I know that from the inside it is about relationships and shared vision. Where else do people sing together week after week? Where else does the past come alive to remind us how much has been learned before the sliver of time we are granted in this world?” (NYT, July 2, 2023)

Likewise, we have the example of Jesus who sang with his disciples and used the art of parables to communicate spiritual truths. Jesus knew the power of the arts to reveal deep spiritual truths.

While music and liturgy may not “save” the church, lessons from scripture and history show us how transformative liturgy and music have accompanied great changes in the church. As we look forward to 2024, we can remember the words of Isaiah’s prayer, “Only the living can thank you, as I am doing today. Each generation tells the next about your faithfulness.” How will the music and worship of your congregation teach current generations and prepare the next?



## Looking Forward to 2024

- ◆ Online Saturday morning events return for 2024
- ◆ Music in Christian Worship Class with Brite Divinity School, June 10-21, 2024, online
- ◆ Summer Intensive and Retreat for Early Career Musicians, August 2-3 and 2-6, 2024

### Did you know?

A CMI membership gives you access to our extensive, carefully curated repertoire searchable by scripture, hymn tune, composer, and more! To become a member, sign up at [www.churchmusicinstitute.org/membership/](http://www.churchmusicinstitute.org/membership/)

### Let's Connect!

@churchmusicinstitute on Instagram, as well as on Facebook and Twitter, to keep up with the latest CMI happenings!

CMI is a proud partner of the American Choral Directors Association, the American Guild of Organists, the National Association of Pastoral Musicians, and the American Federation Pueri Cantores.



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