



Making Music in the Meantime

Excerpted with permission from “Church Music and Covid-19: A Response from the Presbyterian Association of Musicians,” May 21, 2020. To see the original resource, or for more ideas and inspiration, visit presbymusic.org.

The following ideas are offered for congregations as they navigate the return to public worship and seek to bridge online and in-person gatherings. These suggestions may need to be adapted for a particular context of ministry. They should be undertaken only insofar as local resources and current conditions allow.

1. Provide hymnals for each household or invite people to procure their own. Make use of these hymnals in online worship and encourage members to employ them for personal study, devotion, prayer, or in music making. The *Glory to God* hymnal is available for purchase through the PC(USA) Store (pcusastore.com/hymnal).
2. Recruit choir members and other singers in the congregation to call or video chat other members and sing a favorite hymn for them, or record in advance and send by email. This may serve as an entree for pastoral care, outreach, or fellowship.
3. When congregational singing is not possible, worshipers may read and pray the words of hymns in silence while they are interpreted on the organ, piano, or other instrument(s).
4. As long as singing and wind instruments are restricted, organize handbell, string, or percussion ensembles to provide collaborative instrumental music—wearing masks as needed and maintaining appropriate distances.
5. Identify musicians who live in the same family or household and have been sheltering in place together and invite these persons to contribute collaborative video or audio recordings for online worship. When it is safe to gather outdoors or at a distance in the sanctuary these persons may also present musical offerings in public worship.
6. Select a hymn or song for the week, perhaps based on the biblical readings used in public worship or a season in the Christian year. Invite members to study, pray, sing, illustrate, or even memorize the selected hymn each week.
7. Teach the use of hymns as a resource for personal spiritual disciplines. Hymn texts may be used in *lectio divina*. An image, phrase, or word may be used in breath prayer or centering prayer. An instrumentalist might practice a melody as a form of prayer. Phrases or stanzas from hymns can be used in contemplation while exercising, creating visual art, or exploring the natural world.
8. Include meditations on hymn texts in sermons, educational offerings, church newsletters, social media posts, and other avenues for formation and communication. Hymn texts are a valuable resource for theological reflection because they are often so memorable, evocative, concise, and accessible in their articulation of the faith.

9. Collaborate with neighboring congregations and ecumenical partners to encourage one another, learn from one another, and find creative (and safe) ways of teaching new songs, reflecting on hymns, and making music together.
10. Do what you can with what you have ... and trust in God's grace. Try not to be anxious about keeping up with the most technologically adventurous or proficient congregations on the internet. Just glorify and enjoy God, worshiping and making music to the best of your ability at this time. Perhaps it was for times such as these that the psalmist exhorted us: "Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth" (Ps. 100:1).

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