

# **Educating the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Worship Leader for Ministry**

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Immediately following World War II, changes in technology, ecclesiastical influences, and economic, educational and social expectations altered evangelical culture. Thousands of families moved from rural communities in Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, Virginia, and West Virginia to major industrial centers, bringing with them their music, religious preferences, and cultures. The evangelical movement experienced unprecedented growth during the decade of the 40's. According to Chuck Fromm, historian and music publisher, "evangelicals of the 1940s experienced a Great Awakening of their own."

In response to the phenomenal growth experienced by evangelicals during the 40's and 50's, many organizations, denominations, and para-church groups established Bible and Christian liberal arts colleges. At first, these institutions served as trade schools, quickly providing much needed workers for the fast growing evangelical movement. Some colleges and seminaries, such as Fuller Seminary, Word of Life Bible Institute, and The Kings College, were started as an extension of the missionary and educational commitment of well-known radio ministries. Other institutions, such as Houghton College, Wheaton College, Taylor University, John Brown University, Eastern College, Cedarville College, and Columbia Bible College experienced exceptional growth by responding to needs of specific evangelical groups. The establishment of Bible and Christian liberal arts colleges was significant in that it provided a training place for

leaders of worship in *evangelical* church traditions. Music directors were now trained *for music ministry*.

Heretofore, musicians were educated in traditional music conservatories or university music programs. Most degrees were designed to equip musicians as choral conductors or organ masters in liturgical (traditional) churches. Evangelical churches generally used non-professional song leaders to lead their congregations in singing gospel songs. Seldom did they *employ* the services of an organ master.

### ***I. Origins of Worship Training in the Evangelical Tradition***

Five definitive influences affected the growth and development of training worship leaders in the evangelical tradition during these decades:

1) The advent of evangelistic radio programs – for the first time, evangelical worship leaders could hear performances of new, popular songs and almost immediately teach these songs to their congregations.

2) Secular music influences – worship music in the evangelical community was affected significantly by the harmony, rhythm, and form identified as jazz, rhythm and blues, bebop, and rag time. Writers of traditional gospel song emulated the simple song forms and harmonies used on Broadway. Commercial soloists such as Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Shore, Debbie Reynolds, Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, Perry Como, and Nat King Cole introduced new approaches to singing ballads that evangelicals easily adapted to their newly emerging evangelistic worship.

3) The Youth Movement – During the years following the war, evangelicals experienced enormous growth and success among high school and college-age students. As the World War II baby boomers grew into teenagers and adults, para-church

organizations established broad ministry opportunities such as youth camps, summer camps, summer education programs, Bible study groups, youth evangelism teams, Christian athletic organizations, radio ministries for and by youth, youth music teams, vacation Bible schools, Bible institutes and youth music training institutes.

4) Mass evangelistic crusades – Evangelicals such as Billy Graham, Billy Sunday, Rex Humbard, Oral Roberts, Bob Jones, Jack Wyrzten, Percy Crawford, Mordecai Ham, and Oliver Green traveled the country holding revivals and evangelistic campaigns during the 1920s, 1930's, 1940s, and 1950s. *Each had a song leader* that served as archetype of “the way worship ought to be done.” The crusade organizations often had songbooks and music teams that provided local church leadership opportunity to observe and experience first hand the work of highly trained, professional musicians – and, purchase their music.

5) The Bible college movement – Many of these evangelists were also radio personalities. Some helped to establish Bible Colleges and Bible institutes. Fifty years earlier, in 1890, D. L. Moody started Moody Bible Institute. Billy Graham worked closely with Wheaton College. Bob Jones established Bob Jones University. Jack Wyrzten built Word of Life Institutes. Oral Roberts birthed ORU (although in the late 1960's). Percy Crawford founded The Kings College. Charles E. Fuller began Fuller Seminary.

These institutions of higher education had in common *the mission to train and equip ministry practitioners for church-related vocations*. Most institutions developed divisions of church music, dedicated to training musicians to lead music and worship in evangelical traditions. Traveling teams representing one of the many colleges often

popularized these worship traditions. This further defined an *evangelical music market* designed to serve their own alumni and graduates.

To various degrees, each of these influences helped shape the “market demand” for worship leadership. But, it was not until the late 1950’s and early 60’s that these evangelical colleges began graduating students trained as musicians, worship leaders, and song directors to serve the growing evangelical church market. Even then, and with some notable exceptions, it is another decade before the evangelical community realizes the impact these trained musicians have on their worship. By the mid-1970’s, the broad evangelical community finally begin securing full-time, professional music pastors and directors of music to serve their worship needs.

#### **A. Paradigm Past - The Challenge of the Evangelical Tradition**

In studying this area of need for music and worship professionals, it would do us well to briefly investigate qualities unique to the evangelical community. Evangelicals – which encompass some 85 million people – are deeply committed to evangelism. That is, they believe the preaching of the gospel, for the purpose of winning the lost to Christ, is the church’s primary mission.

Evangelicals are one in their commitment to Biblical inspiration and authority. They believe in salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. They endorse the notion that salvation is a personal experience for each believer. Evangelicals believe in the blood atonement, the virgin birth, divinity of Christ, the bodily and visible return of Christ, and the resurrection. They endorse the idea that belief in Jesus Christ is the **ONLY** way for a person to secure a home in heaven.

While the community as a whole support conservative theology, they are diverse in the application of these tenets – that is, they include in their ranks those that practice Reform theology on one hand and Armenian principles on the other – in general, they endorse free worship. That is, their preference is to let individual, local churches and organizations have freedom in organizing and/or executing individual worship style.

Pastors and local church leaders have traditionally looked to their evangelical colleges and universities as a place for finding qualified, skilled musicians and worship leaders. They take for granted these institutions graduate personnel with a practical understanding of local church ministry. They assume these institutions capture a sense of mission with their congregation as they equip and train ministers of music.

Ironically, this assumption is challenged as pastors and congregations discover personnel are equipped as musicians with little or no training in areas vital to ministry. It often becomes apparent that students are often trained and equipped to serve in a “market place” incompatible to that generally identified as evangelical.

## **B. The Plan – The Old School Curricula**

What quickly becomes apparent is that there is not a “norm” or guide for the training of musicians for service in the evangelical community upon which Bible colleges and Christian universities can build curriculum. What might work for one group of evangelicals in preparing worship leadership does not always work for another. Music educators at Christian universities, colleges and Bible institutions were left with no other option than “creating” or “inventing” totally new curriculum or modifying and using previously existing methodology originally designed to meet market demands for other music careers. Most chose the later and began using music curriculum for training

worship leaders that was really intended for other purposes. The end result has been most disappointing.

As the need for well trained, equipped ministers of music began to intensify, and in an effort to insure accreditation acceptance of their music departments by academia, music administrators at evangelical institutions began focusing on “developing great musicians” instead of equipping great ministry-musicians. While their motives seemed noble and certainly justifiable in establishing *some* type of “norm” for vocational training and solid academic education for the musician, the approach left a gap in the equipping process for those going into full time worship vocations.

Over the years, music educators began to adopt one of five approaches to training of worship leaders. These approaches were based on music education curriculum models and modified to training needs for ministers of music and worship:

1) **The traditional music education degree** – students sensing a call into the worship ministry were encouraged to prepare themselves as music educators. Upon graduation, they apply their training to the local church. This approach received mixed success. The approach does not include application of learned skills to ministry, students do not receive adequate exposure to church literature, methods classes do not allow for experience with ministry-based ensembles, and there is a void of Biblical training in Christian theology, evangelism, and evangelical doctrine.

2) **The music performance degree** – worship leaders believing God has called them to the worship ministry are trained to be classical music performers. This type of training prepares a student for the stage as an opera singer, composer, conductor, soloist with at theatre group, or member of in one of America’s few symphony orchestras. It

certainly is a quality degree. In the truest sense the music performance degree is designed to meet “a vocational need.” Upon graduation, the student going to serve in the evangelical church market is required to make application to the ministry based on their training as a performer. Sometimes this is successful. Sometimes not.

3) **The sacred music degree** – evangelical institutions adopted this degree because it appears to have immediate application to needs in evangelical churches. However, this approach to education generally equips the musician to serve as organ master or organist-conductor. Students receive a heavy dose of training in the classical sacred music genres. This model is designed to equip musicians for service in mainline traditional protestant churches – Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc. – not the evangelical church. Success with this kind of degree in the evangelical market are mixed.

4) **The hybrid approach to training church musicians** - many evangelical institutions, in order to receive endorsement from their accreditation agencies and *keep peace* with ecclesiastical leadership, adopt a kind of modified music education degree. This involves taking the music education or professional performance degree previously mentioned and crafting a training discipline suitable for the unique needs of a church. Students add to their traditional training in music theory, music history, ensembles, and applied disciplines, classroom experience in church music methodologies, hymnology, and church music philosophies and in a rare instance, a course in worship. Upon graduation, students applied their understanding of music to the rigors of daily ministry. This approach has also received mixed reviews by graduating musicians.

5) **The Church Music Curriculum** – the student called into full time music ministry is encouraged to take a series of courses designed for immediate application to

church music. It is a vocational degree. I must say, the Southern Baptists have been the most successful in using this model. As recently as 1995, and according to their own research, SBC seminaries, colleges, and universities have provided more than 28,000 full-time ministers of music for the nearly 50,000 local churches.

This type of church-music training involves a combination of the four approaches to education previously listed. In addition to training in the music theory and applied performance disciplines, specialized courses in choral techniques, children's music, junior high and high school music methodology, instrumental methods, ensemble methodologies, and church music literature could help equip the student to serve in local churches. Following the seminary model of providing professional ministry degrees, undergraduate and graduate curriculum was developed that articulated the students training and expertise as a *church musician*. Seminaries and Christian colleges offered the BCM, MCM, DCM, DMin in Church music, DCMMin, PhD in Church Music, etc. – all in an effort to meet the needs of the local church. Depending on the institution's definition of "church music", students graduating with this degree *seemed* better prepared to meet the demands of the local church.

The philosophical basis for this degree is that students taking this kind of specialized approach to training will be equipped to serve the evangelical church as a *worship leader*. But, not so fast. The definition of "church music" varies from institution to institution, church to church, and community to community. Institutions still placed little emphasis on equipping musicians for ministry responsibilities. Choral experiences are often limited to a study of classical genres. And, graduates with this degree often

miss the opportunity for involvement with local churches. Reception by pastors of this approach to worship leadership remains mixed.

### **C. The Paradigm Predicament**

During the late 60's and early 70's the way we "do music and worship" in the evangelical began to change. Influences from "The Jesus Movement," popular radio, new and exciting youth musicals, television evangelists, and changing education norms began to impact our worship ministries. There developed a Christian music sub-culture. The evangelical church embraced a choral genre based on popular musical styles and literature. More and more churches were beginning to hire professional musicians to help develop their ministries. Increasingly, musicians were asked to provide leadership in areas for which they were not trained or equipped.

This posed a serious professional challenge. Pastors looked for musicians that understood a broader role in theological disciplines and pastoral ministries. They began looking for *worship leaders* instead of *ministers of music*. Over the course of the following three decades (1970-1990), many evangelical colleges began to *fall out of step* with the realities and needs for music leadership in the local *evangelical* church. Institutions and music departments did not "keep up" with the changing dynamics of the markets for which they were created to serve. Graduates from their colleges began looking for creative venues for training that could "fill the gap" between what they had learned in college and what they actually needed on the field. Many musicians, at the encouragement of their senior pastors, turned their attention to attending workshops provided by any number of publishing houses, music ministries, or local church organizations.

By 1990, other influences began to erode the confidence pastors had in their seminaries, Christian colleges, and denominational institutions preparing music and worship personnel adequately trained for the local church. Several influences contributed to this shift in confidence:

**First, the praise and worship movement** (sometimes called a worship awakening) was sweeping across the nation by 1990.

**Second, the baby boomers were now middle age** and their children had unique and important needs never before realized. Church growth experts were better able to articulate the generational differences between age groups and responded accordingly with new ministry concepts and ideas.

**Third, the Christian music industry had become of age** and was making important contributions to local church music literature.

**Fourth, the information age** was upon us. Technology was moving into the church faster than expected. The Internet quickly becomes a household term.

**Fifth, mega churches began to emerge** with unique needs and dynamic ministry opportunities for the musician.

**Sixth, the seeker sensitive, seeker driven, or purpose driven church became a viable option for evangelicals** to follow in developing growth strategies for their churches.

**Seventh, post-modern influences** impacted the strategies pastors and church planters used for evangelism, communication of the gospel and approaches to *experiencing* worship in evangelical communities. New churches embracing *contemporary only music* for worship were established in unprecedented numbers. (They

church growth strategies are driven by stylistic music preferences – an issue that will be discussed later).

Through these changes and shifts in cultural norms, God began moving in the hearts of worship leaders across the country – around the world. There emerged a strong commitment to teaching God’s people to worship. Ministers of music began to shed their titles as musicians and take on the role of **worship leaders** and **worship pastors**.

National leaders and church pastors in the evangelical community began finding creative ways to articulate the “role of the worship leader.” For example, as early as 1990, Chuck Swindoll’s minister of music, Howie Stevenson, was called: Minister of Creative Worship – which implied a broadening of the music tasks to include the use of lighting, Broadway-type theatre, visual arts, etc.

## ***II. Obligation for Worship Training in the Evangelical Tradition***

By 2000, the evangelical church was in yet another paradigm shift. Churches were no longer looking for ministers of music, they were looking for worship leaders. Many musicians trained in the late 80s and early 90s had “tasted” the wonder of leading worship – not just music. Their hunger for *experience* was deeper than aesthetic often found in music – no matter the stylistic preference. They watched as their congregations captured the joy of blending intellectual *knowledge* about worship with the *experience* of participating “in” worship. Numbers in churches adopting a new “worship focused approach” began to grow in unprecedented numbers. Worship leadership began to adapt their own preferences for worship expression *to the culture of their people*. In other words, worship leaders and pastors began to acknowledge and respond to the fact that

each congregation had a unique and very personal worship language – most often influenced by cultural and stylistic preference.

### **A. The Paradigm Shift - The Culture Changes**

Out of these changes, worship leaders and pastors began modifying their approach to church leadership. Worship leaders began to express a genuine hunger for knowing God. There arose a commitment to *honest worship*. Lay-leaders and professional church staff leaders began sharing a passion for worship their people. The post-modern demand for “experience” coupled with a “commitment to sincerity” emerged. Seeker worship continued to spread through the land as evangelicals nurtured an increased thrust toward evangelistic efforts. For the first time in American church history, and in response to the reality of the nations growing ethnic diversity, a commitment to multi-ethnic worship began to take place. Unexpected political and cultural influences on the evangelical community began to shape the way congregations approached worship, including: – the national experience of 9/11; renewed commitment and thrust by Christian colleges to better articulate a *biblical worldview* to their students; the experience-oriented demands of a post-modern young-adult generation; the changing dynamics in the “normal American family;” the growing acceptance of women in worship-leading roles; scandals and inappropriate behavior by trusted church leadership – on all levels; the rapid surge in growth of the information age; the shifting terrain of American politics; the growing influences of the charismatic worship on non-charismatic congregations; the emergence of a “new liturgical movement among evangelicals; the new emphasis on global awareness; the emergent church; the growing commitment by young families to quickly amass wealth; and the continued decline in mainline protestant denominations – *all*

*combined* to forever change the landscape of seeker worship and missions-driven ministry.

## **B. The Call – Purpose**

Through these paradigm shifts, the role of the worship leader has become more defined. Today, local churches, their pastors, and their leadership are looking for professionals to meet their needs. They are looking for personnel that will help teach their people about worship, train their people to worship, encourage and edify their congregations through worship, evangelize their community through worship, and promote the local congregations as they worship. Today, the role of the worship leader includes responsibilities as: 1) Worshiper; 2) Disciple; 3) Theologian; 4) Professional; 5) Artists; 6) Musician; 7) Teacher; 8) Pastor; 9) Counselor; 10) Leader; 11) Businessman; and, 12) Family man. Never before has so much been expected of any one professional ministry position. Yet, there are thousands of evangelical congregations across this land looking for personnel that can meet these criteria on one level or another.

## ***III. Opportunities for Worship Training in the Evangelical Tradition***

So, how do we as music educators equally committed to our evangelical tenets and to equipping musicians and worship leaders respond to these changes and needs? As more and more changes in the church ministry have emerged, it has become obvious that many of our colleges and institutions of higher learning are **NOT** adequately preparing our young worship leaders to “do” ministry. Technology has forced us to think differently. Our methods of communication have changed. Our people’s expectations for sound quality, video, multi-sensory experiences are much more sophisticated. We serve a generation that is much more visual and “need-based” than any before.

### **A. Emerging Paradigms for Worship Ministry**

New paradigms have emerged that require educators to rethink approaches to the training of church leadership in general and music-worship personnel in particular. The mega-church serves a growing number of constituents comfortable with large, multi-staff, worship leadership. Large, comprehensive worship ministries now include senior worship administrators, office staff, video personnel, technology savvy leadership, missions coordinators, producers, songwriters and orchestrators, instrumental directors, teachers skilled in children's worship, youth music personnel skilled in all sorts of contemporary music genres.

Evangelical congregations look for worship personnel with hearts for pastoral ministry. They want people with an understanding of multi-generational communication. Today's worship leader needs to be skilled as a theologian and a musician.

### **B. The Need for a New Curricula**

Through the decades, since those early Christian college beginnings in the 1940s and 50s, training of musicians for the evangelical church has become much more defined. As the need on the part of local churches has become more pronounced, there has developed a serious, and at times painful, division between those seeking to provide practical training for the church and those seeking to maintain commitment to educational and musical integrity.

**1) The On-going Conflict.** In general, and with some wonderful exceptions, it might appear evangelical institutions of higher education deliberately *lag behind* in providing personnel equipped to meet changing needs in the local church – especially in areas of worship training. In some institutions, there has developed dissension,

disagreement, and at times open opposition between the public relations or ministry departments and their own music departments over the *real purpose and approach* for music training.

Public relations departments, because of their unique role in sending traveling teams to the local church, often maintain a close and practical contact with pastors, ministers of music, and denominational leaders. They seem to embrace the changing norms in music ministry. Their music teams are charged with the responsibility of communicating to the average man in the pew “real ministry.” Often, they develop pragmatic ways to communicate and “deliver worship experiences” to local congregations. Sometimes, they explain to their educator colleagues committed to “traditional music” that their traditional approaches to “music education” for the worship leader will not survive the changes of this fast paced, consumer driven, evangelical culture. This spirit and potentially crippling conflict between the public relations and music departments is sometimes perpetuated by pastors that see worship and music only as a means for advancing their own self-serving, utilitarian and often manipulating roles “for ministry” – however that many be defined.

Music departments, on the other hand, react by saying something like, “we do good music . . . music only worthy of our worthy God”. In reality, they often lack the vision or energy to change. Some seem deprived of the ability to find creative ways to meet the needs of people. Sometimes, music educators themselves are inadequately equipped to communicate in the new popular music genres.

**2) Reaction by college administrators.** As norms for training worship leaders continue to change, the division between the these two “purposes in training church

musicians/worship leaders” has become more pronounced, more public, and at times embarrassing hostile for institutional leaders. When hearing of the conflict, students, alumni, and pastors sometimes shake their heads in disbelief and ask, “Why can’t leaders of music at Christian colleges get along? After all, aren’t we training worship leaders?” College administrators become increasingly more frustrated at the reaction and resistance by their music department leadership to the idea of training worship leaders as “performers of pop music.”

Exasperated with the personality conflicts in their own institutions, these administrators often turn for help to other departments within the walls of their own academic community for help. In some cases, administrators totally abandon the idea of working with music departments for the training of worship leaders. Instead, and in a last ditch effort to meet the demand by the evangelical community to prepare worship leaders as theologians, skilled and competent musicians, and qualified leaders with integrity and academic accountability, they look to their departments of religion, communication, or youth ministry and find personnel eager to be of assistance. Obviously, this “get around the music department people” approach further intensifies problem and struggle. And, graduates heading for the local church begin to realize they are not adequately equipped as skilled ministry-musicians.

### **C. What is the Solution?**

Responding to the needs of the evangelical community’s need for equipped, trained, and qualified worship pastors is much like the parable of the Blind man and the publicist below:

-The Blind Man

One day, there was a blind man sitting on the steps of a building with a hat by his feet and a sign that read: "I am blind, please help."

A creative publicist was walking by and stopped to observe. He saw that the blind man had only a few coins in his hat. He dropped in more coins and, without asking for permission, took the sign and rewrote it.

He returned the sign to the blind man and left. That afternoon the publicist returned to the blind man and noticed that his hat was full of bills and coins.

The blind man recognized his footsteps and asked if it was he who had rewritten his sign and wanted to know what he had written on it.

The publicist responded: "Nothing that was not true. I just wrote the message a little differently." He smiled and went on his way.

The new sign read: "Today is spring and I cannot see it."

This parable may illustrate the dynamic of evangelical colleges face in responding to critical need to equip worship pastors. Perhaps, the "blind person" represents the college student with passion to lead God's people to worship but never finding a venue for professional training. Maybe the publicist represents a Christian college administrator that has the insight and courage to provide alternative communication, methodology, and approaches for worship leadership pedagogy. And, those giving donating money represent the response of people in the evangelical church with genuine needs for worship expression.

Ironically, the blind man still *performed* his music. The publicist found a creative way to communicate. And, those donating money actually respond to perceived need.

So, how do we design a curriculum for the purpose of equipping worship leaders *for* the evangelical culture? How do we adequately prepare students to genuinely respond to do what God has CALLED them to do – as skilled musicians, communicators, and theologians?

First, worship training needs to provide a platform whereby students can thoroughly understand and nurture their CALLING. They need to value the Biblical basis for their calling. They need to identify with the opportunities, responsibilities, and parameters of being obedient to God's CALL upon their lives. And, they need to be taught how to respond to their calling through various areas of service.

Second, any curriculum needs to equip worship leaders as *skilled professionals*. This includes a thorough dose of worship theology, principles of leadership, OT and NT foundations for worship, history and philosophy of worship, and a focused appreciation for various approaches to creative worship. They need to be given occasion to make application of learned principles to ministry opportunities. They need to demonstrate skill as singers, players of instrument (the more the better), and communicators of the gospel. And, students must be confident in their ability to work with people.

Third, the curriculum should meet the expectations of any accredited baccalaureate degree, complete with studies in the liberal arts, sciences, and languages. We have the opportunity to enjoy and continue a relationship with the academic community while providing practical degrees designed to equip young men and women for a specific task in worship leading. Remember, the issue driving this mandate for change is because *our present approach to training and equipping worship leaders is not adequately meeting the needs of the evangelical community*. This kind of degree is not at

all unlike equipping the nursing, aviation, or sports management student. These are training programs that equip students to go right into the work force. After all, the undergraduate B.S. N., B.M., B.M.Ed. and most seminary degrees, for that matter, are already labeled vocational degrees.

Fourth, young professionals should receive on-going training from practitioners already in the field. Ideally, this should include resident and guest teachers that have years of life experience working as worship leaders and ministers of music. The principles of short and long term mentoring by these practitioners must to be at the heart of this training. This means there must be a dynamic emphasis by the institution on providing dynamic in-the-field experience for their student leaders of worship.

Fifth, because of *all the changes in ministry norms*, the curriculum used in equipping worship leaders must be guided by more market demand than academic precedent. This will necessitate institutions equipping students as *masters* of specific tasks in the evangelical job market. The training must be broader than the traditional approaches to music education, performance or sacred music degrees of the past.

Sixth, a unique challenge in the evangelical job market is the worship leader's need to be technologically savvy. Training must demonstrate learning outcomes in areas of video, computer, and audio technology.

Seventh, any program dedicated to the training of worship leaders must connect with the local church. After all, this is a program of study for the church.

Be prepared, the academic elite may label any degree that focuses on these kinds of curriculum goals as "a vocational discipline." To the evangelical community, this is a label of strength, not weakness. These changes do not imply educators should bend to

public pressure and provide for their students a “dumbed-down” music/religion degree.

Change in curricula approach and teaching methodology does not imply, not for a moment, that we compromise our goals of equipping students as skilled musicians, students of religion, or practitioners in ministry. On the contrary – these changes suggest we face the reality that *the historical approach to equipping worship-leading church musicians are not working*. And, that we now must take a bold step and address these ministry issues head on, redesign our curricula, update our teaching techniques, and recommit ourselves the task God has called US to as educators.

To accomplish these curricula goals may mean that traditional areas of music preparation should be modified to meet market demands. (For example, music recitals may need to be broadened so as to demonstrate student abilities in worship programming, drama, scripture reading, and experience in media communication--including lighting, sound, video, and appropriate technology). And, if these seven curriculum mandates are adopted, it may involve facing the serious challenge of providing a retooling opportunities for departmental faculty -- to enlarge their own life experience, redirect their focus as educators, and further develop their own skills as musicians.

#### **D. Organizing to meet the need.**

Now, we face the reality of asking the “How” questions: “How do we do this?” How do we make these changes and still meet the demands of our departmental mission and goal?” “How do we make changes without compromising our standing with much needed accrediting associations?” “How do we maintain high academic standards and still design curricula to meet vocational needs for a contemporary, pop-driven evangelical community?” “How do we respond to these contemporary needs yet still uphold the

values our past?” “How do departmental and institutional administrators protect the good people that have given their lives to training and equipping musicians?”

These are good and healthy questions. Change is needed if we are going to meet the demands of this generation and the next. And, there is “no quick fix.” It will take time, thoughtful assessment, and Holy Spirit wisdom to craft curriculum designed to meet needs created by these new worship ministry paradigms. Some may argue that we are “chasing fads and allowing culture to dictate intellectual endeavors. But, we must change. It can be done. And, it must be done if we are going to take hold of this of the prospect that God is giving us to adequately equip young worship leaders.

So, as we seize this dynamic opportunity, let us keep the following in mind:

First, *changes in this area of training worship leaders must be forged by people with great vision.* They must see the potential of what God can do when people are willing to be obedient. There will be “nay-sayers” that will seek to discourage, dismantle and defeat those seeking to meet these dynamic needs. Those leading these endeavors must see past the immediate conflict and build for the future.

Second, *change on this level requires unified purpose, vision, effort and commitment to the reach the goal.* Everyone must buy into the plan for change. This includes administrators, public relations personnel, Christian service directors, local church leaders, and the education community itself.

Third, *leaders must keep an eye on the “lessons learned from the past” as they cast new vision and direction for the future.* They must keep in their hearts a deep appreciation and value of their own history. They must carefully avoid making the

mistakes previous generations have made – including the mistake of ignoring changes paradigm models.

Fourth, *leadership commitment in the training of worship leaders must provide quality education with solid, well conceived learning outcomes that meet growing demands of the changing evangelical community.* This is critical. Without these outcomes in place, the changes will be temporary and for misguided reasons.

Fifth, *curricula for training worship leaders must be connected “at the hip” to local church ministries.* The relationship between the church and the music department charged with the responsibility of equipping worship leaders should be much like that of a teaching hospital where physicians put into practice that which they have learned in the classroom. Students must have the mentoring experiences with practitioners already in the field. These churches should demonstrate the kind of ministries in which students are preparing themselves for service.

### **Conclusion**

As we focus on training worship leaders for the future, we need to understand that the role of the worship leader in the evangelical tradition will continually change. Therefore, educators **MUST** constantly demonstrate a commitment to teaching biblical principles for worship, not stylistic preferences. The moment any program is driven by stylistic preference for worship will be the moment our “innovative” curricula becomes outdated and potentially useless, we repeat the mistakes of the past, and we face the same issues ministry training again – in ten years – in fifteen.

It is important as we forge this new dynamic together that we never lose sight, energy, or passion to teach students to become familiar with the various worship

languages associated with *all evangelical cultures*. To reach this noble goal, those of us with teaching and leadership responsibilities must constantly maintain our own involvement in the changing role of the worship leader. *We must be practitioners, participants, and active leaders of worship in our local churches*. We dare not give in to the temptation to be “a college teacher.” We must always be worship leaders. We just happen to teach college.

Finally, as we face the wonderful challenge of meeting dynamic needs of this new millennium, it is critical we as educators constantly commit ourselves to equipping students equally skilled as musicians, theologians, and leaders of people – as worshipers – in a changing culture that desperately seeks to find answers to life’s problems through the truth we practice, share, preach, proclaim and sing.