

CHILDREN'S CHOIRS IN CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

by

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### **Abstract**

Music has been used for worship since the early church. Historically, choirs and instruments have been used to lead congregations in worship; however, since the twenty-first century there has been a push toward contemporary style worship. Traditional styles of worship continue to make use of a choir, piano or organ, and sometimes other instruments. For the purpose of this study, contemporary worship is defined as “that expression of worship within the Christian church today that is marked by the primary usage of contemporarily written worship lyrics and music, is sonically concurrent (to some degree) with the music of popular culture” (Sweetman, 2014, p. 2). Recently, churches increasingly combine traditional and contemporary worship styles. Because worship styles are different, many churches have different-style music programs, if any, for children. Traditional churches typically have a children’s choir program, but contemporary churches are less likely to have such traditional choirs. Because of this, children across different worship styles receive different levels of musical training. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to document the structure of children’s choir programs, their instructional practices, and their performances in churches with traditional, contemporary, and combined traditional/contemporary worship services.

*Keywords:* children’s choirs, worship styles, contemporary, traditional, blended

## Literature Review

### Overview of Children's Choirs in Churches

The use of music in Jewish worship dates back to the Book of Psalms, stating, "Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth; Break forth and sing for joy and sing praises" (Psalm 98:4, New King James Version). Biblical accounts note that it was customary to train choirs to sing for elaborate. Often Levites, who were responsible for formal worship, established villages in which singing families cohabitated and trained. It was common for children to participate in chant with adults in Hebrew Temple rituals after attending Hebrew Synagogue schools, where young boys were taught to sing (Kemp, 1973). In A.D. 314, *Schola Cantorum* was established under Pope Sylvester, indicating the beginning of formal choirboy training in the church. Later in A.D. 597, Pope Gregory sent St. Augustine to England to begin the song school at Canterbury (Wolfe, 2001). Following the formation of this school, traveling missionaries began to establish new singing schools, furthering the movement of boys' choirs within the church. Talented boys were selected for these choirs and trained to become church musicians. However, music began to become too complicated, allowing only monks and trained boys to sing. Untrained children were no longer able to participate (Kemp, 1973).

In 1517, Martin Luther developed his 95 Theses, in which he explained his beliefs and reasoning for separating from the Catholic church. Luther believed that all children should be trained in schools to sing in choirs and lead the church congregation (Kemp, 1973). Establishing the Lutheran church, Luther continued in much of the Catholic liturgy, but also began writing polyphonic settings of chorales for the choir (Stipp, 2007). He additionally adapted folk songs settings with spiritual texts. The purpose of these settings was that they "were arranged in four parts to give the young—who should at any rate be trained in music and other fine arts—

something to wean them from love ballads and carnal songs and teach them something of value in their place, this combining the good with the pleasing, as is proper for youth” (Luther, 1965, p. 21).

Beginning in the 19th century, Lowell Mason led the newly formed Sunday School movement. He led the church music reform movement and established new pedagogy and music repertoires. Mason developed the first children’s singing school in America. In order to improve church music, the public school in Boston was the first to admit music to the curriculum in 1837 (Kemp, 1973). In 1906, Elizabeth VanFleet Vosseller, choir director in Flemington, New Jersey, organized a children’s choir in the Methodist Episcopal Church. She believed children needed more music in their religious education and wanted to establish a feeder group for the adult choir of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Her goal for this children’s choir was a quality performance, causing only children with lovely voices to sing. She later wrote two books on children’s choir within the church: *The Use of a Children’s Choir in the Church, Its Methods and Practical Value* and *Junior Choirs* (Kemp, 1973).

Church choirs continue to lead congregations in many churches around the world today. However, since the late twentieth century, there has been an evident movement from traditional churches with traditional choirs to contemporary churches. Debates over the styles and practices of churches and worship services dates back as far as the integration of music into worship; however, the specific traditional-contemporary dichotomy is more recent (Justice, 2017).

Contemporary worship is defined as

“that expression of worship within the Christian church today that is marked by the primary usage of contemporarily written worship lyrics and music, is sonically concurrent (to some degree) with the music of popular culture, and is widely and

increasingly across the Protestant (and to some degree, Roman Catholic) spectrum of today's globally worshipping congregations" (Sweetman, 2014, p. 2).

Often, the purpose of this new style of worship service is to attract people in the current society, speak to the contemporary culture, and minister to people in their situation. However, in creating this attraction, many contemporary churches no longer have traditional choir but praise bands (Phillips, 2007). Because there is often no traditional choir, there is not a need for a children's choir to feed the adult choir, leaving these churches with no children's choir. Phillips explains that "only time will tell if popular-style contemporary church music will so overwhelm our culture as to make traditional choral training unnecessary" (2007, p. 23), also affecting the fate of children's choirs.

### **Purpose of Present Study**

The literature describes the decrease in overall choral training as church music becomes increasingly more popular sounding, thus affecting the need for choral training in children's choirs. Churches that make use of popular sounding music often do so in order to attract people to church, especially those that previously would not have attended due to lack of interest in traditional services (Phillips, 2007). However, churches with no choir could be losing opportunities to teach music literacy within the church setting.

Based on the review of literature, the researcher's hypothesis is that churches with a higher percentage of traditional services will place more importance on having a more established practice and pedagogy for teaching choir within the church setting. Therefore, this study addresses the documentation of children's choir programs, their instructional practices and performances in churches with traditional, contemporary, and combined traditional/contemporary worship styles. This data may make it possible to discern trends in the

children's choir inclusion and development in current church practices, with a further goal of laying a descriptive foundation for future research and development of possible curriculum for different styles of worship.

### **Methodology**

To document children's choir programs, a questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect data. For the present study, the questionnaire was created by the researcher to include general questions about the church and the children's choir. Because a variety of churches were surveyed, not all churches contained the specific position of Children's Choir Director. Because of this, the director of the children's choir was able to complete the survey for churches with children's choirs. In churches that did not have one, the worship pastor or director completed the survey in regard to their worship. For the purpose of the present study, the combined traditional/contemporary church style was referred to as "blended."

### **Sample and Setting**

The worship pastors and children's choir directors came from a total of ninety churches within the Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) metroplex. The researcher determined the "DFW metroplex" to include Dallas, Collin, and Tarrant Counties. In order to ensure equal representation from each style or worship, the researcher chose the following numbers of churches to represent each style: 30 traditional churches, 30 blended churches, and 30 contemporary churches.

### **Measure**

The survey used for the present study was created by the researcher to anonymously obtain information about each children's choir and/or worship program. The survey contained twenty-one questions, with the first being consensual (Appendix A). The survey began with six

questions about the background of the church, including congregation size, denomination, ethnicity, style of worship, and role of respondent. The remaining fourteen questions pertained to children's choirs. These questions elicited information about the structure, size, and prerequisites of the children's choir. The respondents were asked about their repertoire and literature sources, as well as, how often they meet and perform. Other questions included information about music literacy, dress code, and obstacles to their choir. The final two questions addressed the focus and purpose of the children's choir.

The questions were either short answer or multiple choice. Multiple choice questions had varying answers for the respondents to choose from. For short answer questions, respondents were given a box to answer in.

### **Procedure**

The researcher created the anonymous survey in the Qualtrics software (Qualtrics, Provo, UT). The researcher obtained the directors' email addresses through publicly available church websites for the aforementioned selected churches. The researchers sent all ninety directors/worship pastors an electronic link to the survey via email in the beginning of February. The researcher then redistributed the survey twice within the course of two weeks.

The survey took approximately ten minutes to complete. Of the 90 surveys distributed, 46 were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 51%.

### **Data Analyses**

In order to determine descriptive statistics for each question, the results were exported into Excel. Percentages were determined for each question. The researcher categorized each answer into similar categories depending on the question. For example, the categories for the question "From your perspective, what are the biggest obstacles to growing the children's choir

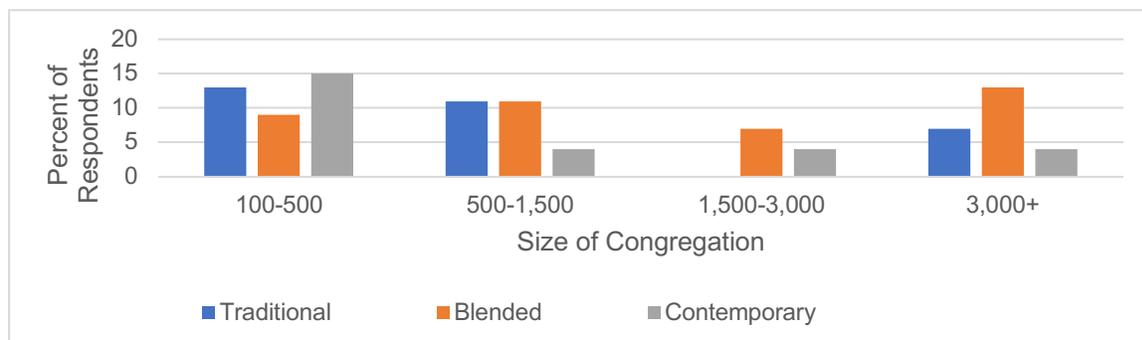
program in your church setting?” were as follows: student priorities/commitment, leadership/organization, logistics, and church culture. To analyze each item in the survey, the researcher calculated the percentages of each answer choice to determine trends and similarities overall. The researcher then calculated the percentages of each answer choice within each style of worship to determine similarities and differences between styles of worship. These percentages were exported into Excel to create frequency/similarity graphs to display these similarities and differences.

### Findings

Descriptive statistics were calculated for each item of the survey in order to determine the trends of children’s choirs within difference styles of worship. The results are organized according to the style of question: church background information, children’s choir structure, music literacy, and overall purpose and focus.

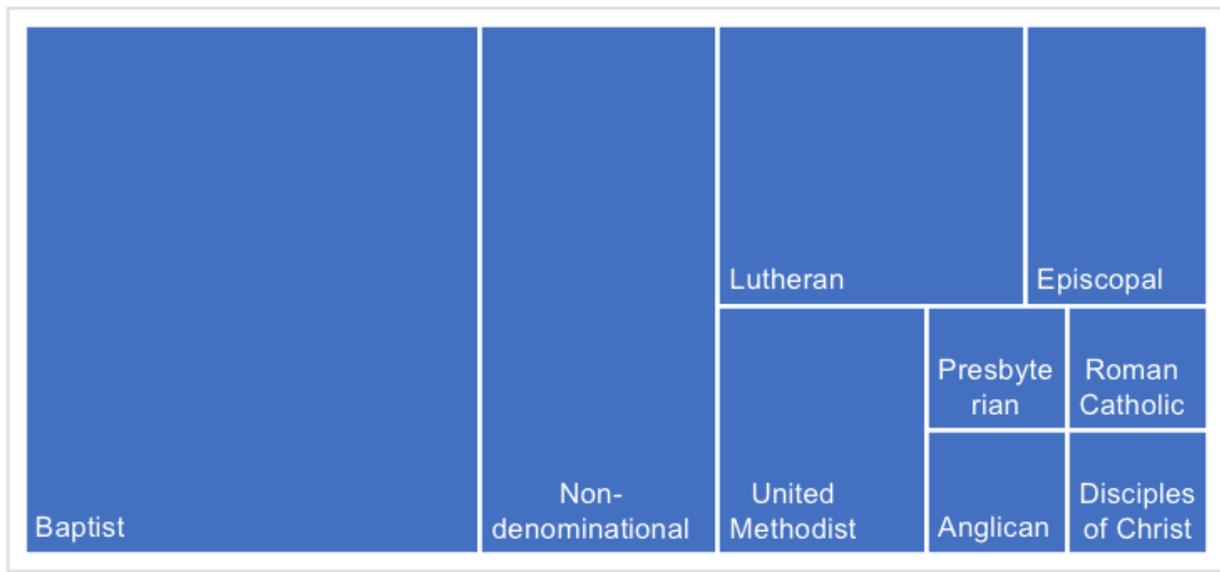
#### Church Background Information

In order to determine the background of the churches, the researcher calculated the percentages for each item in the first section of questions. Figure 1 shows the congregation sizes, corresponding to their style of worship. There is overall no specific trend between the three styles of worship.



*Figure 1.* Percentage of congregation size. This figure illustrates the sizes of congregations in different styles of worship.

All but three congregations total were mostly white (93.5%), and only two (4.3%) overall were of Hispanic or Latino origin. Figure 2 displays the breakdown of denominations that participated in the study.



*Figure 2.* Breakdown of denomination. This figure shows the percent of each denomination that participated in the survey.

Further, the percentage of respondents that came different styles is as follows: traditional churches - 32.6%, blended churches – 29.1%, contemporary – 28.2%. The response rates were relatively similar; however, traditional churches had the highest response rate. The final background question – “Does your church have a children’s choir program?” – acted as a transition question to the next style of question. Respondents were able to answer with “Yes,” “For certain occasions,” “Children worship leaders,” or “No.” For the purpose of this study, “children worship leaders” were determined to be a student or child who leads worship in front of a congregation, but is not a part of a traditional choir. Table 1 shows the percentage of churches within each style of worship in congruence with their answer. The data is first

displayed by percentage within respondents of a certain style of worship and then by percentage of total respondents. There were no traditional churches that had no children's choir, whereas contemporary churches had the highest response rate by far that they did not have a children's choir. Contemporary churches were also the only style of worship that had "children worship leaders." Traditional churches had the highest percentage of having a children's choir. Overall, 67.4% of respondents answered that they did have a children's choir, and only 8.7% answered that they did not.

Table 1

*Percentage of Children's Choir Programs*

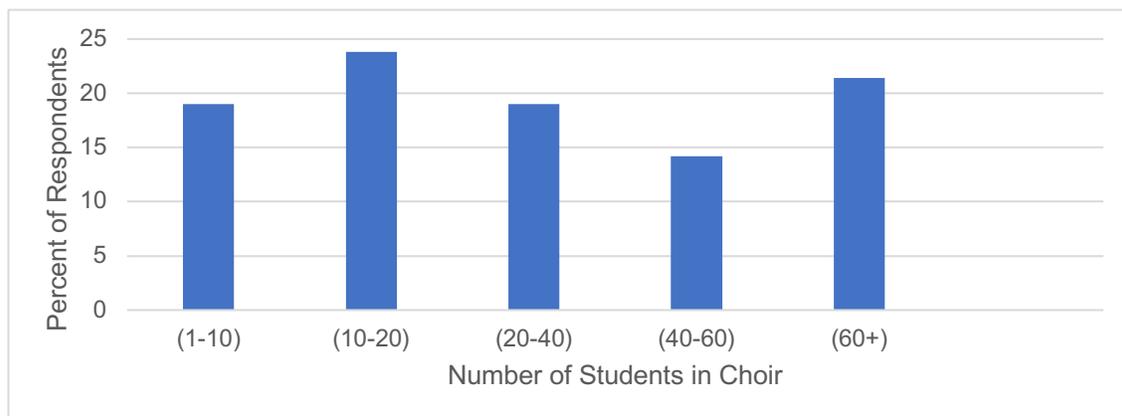
Worship Style	Yes	For certain occasions	Children worship leaders	No
<i>By Style of Worship</i>				
Traditional	86.7%	13.3%	0%	0%
Blended	77.8%	16.7%	0%	0%
Contemporary	30.8%	30.8%	15.4%	23.1%
<i>Overall</i>				
Traditional	28.3%	4.3%	0%	0%
Blended	30.4%	6.5%	0%	2.2%
Contemporary	8.7%	8.7%	4.3%	6.5%
TOTAL	67.4%	19.6%	4.3%	8.7%

**Children's Choir Structure**

Another style of questions helped explain the structure of each children's choir. Those that did not have a children's choir had the option of selecting "not applicable" for the remainder of the questions. The first question asked about the true structure of the program, such as ages and requirements or prerequisites for participation. 47.8% of churches had only one children's

choir. The number of churches decreased as the number of choirs in the program increased. Only two churches (4.3%) had children worship leaders. Overall, the typical range for children's choir, regardless of style, was between kindergarten/first grade and fifth/sixth grade. The one major deviation to this range was a children's worship leader program that began in sixth grade and continued until college. There was also no direct correlation between the style of church and the size of the children's choir. The majority (83.9%) of churches with a children's choir had no requirements for participation, and there were only two that were auditioned (4.3%).

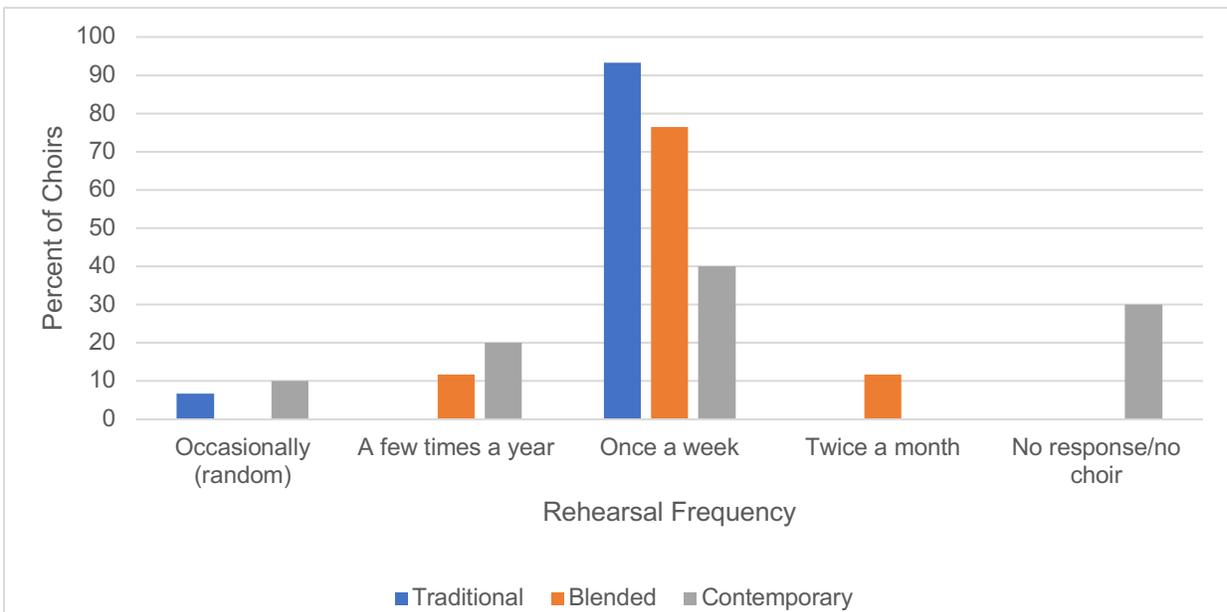
Similarly, to the size of children's choir, there was no direct correlation between style of worship and the number of students in a children's choir. The number of students in each choir was almost equally varied. Figure 3 displays the breakdown of choir attendance and participation.



*Figure 3.* Percentage of size of choir. This figure illustrates the number of students in the children's choirs.

When asked how often their choir meets, respondents were able to answer "occasionally (random)," "a few times a year," "once a week," or "twice a month." Those that had no choir had the option to answer, "not applicable." Overall, 73.8% of churches with children's choirs meet once a week. In each style of worship, the largest percentage of those with children's choir meet

once a week, traditional churches with 93.3%, blended churches with 76.6%, and contemporary churches with 40%. Figure 4 shows how often churches self-reported their children's choir meet, broken into styles of worship.



*Figure 4.* Rehearsal frequency. This figure displays how often each choir rehearses in each style of worship.

Respondents were not only asked about rehearsal frequency, but also performance frequency and performance setting; Figure 5 displays the responses. Overall, 100% of traditional children's choirs, 94.1% of blended children's choirs, and 80% of children's choirs lead worship during the year. After determining the overall percentage of choirs that lead worship at least once a year, the researcher determined how often choirs sang within each style of worship. The highest response rate for traditional churches was 4-5 times a year (27.8%), with once a month closely following (22.2%). 44.4% of blended churches said their choir sings in worship at least once a month, and 27.8% sings 1-3 times a year. 38% of contemporary churches lead worship 1-3 times a year; however, there were more churches that did not lead worship during the year than the other styles of worship. Performances were determined by the researcher to include any

performance outside of a weekly church service, or anything other than leading worship at a weekly service. All churches perform outside of the service far less frequently than they lead worship within the church service. Overall, traditional churches perform more than other styles of worship. The more contemporary the church, the fewer opportunities they have to perform outside of the church service.

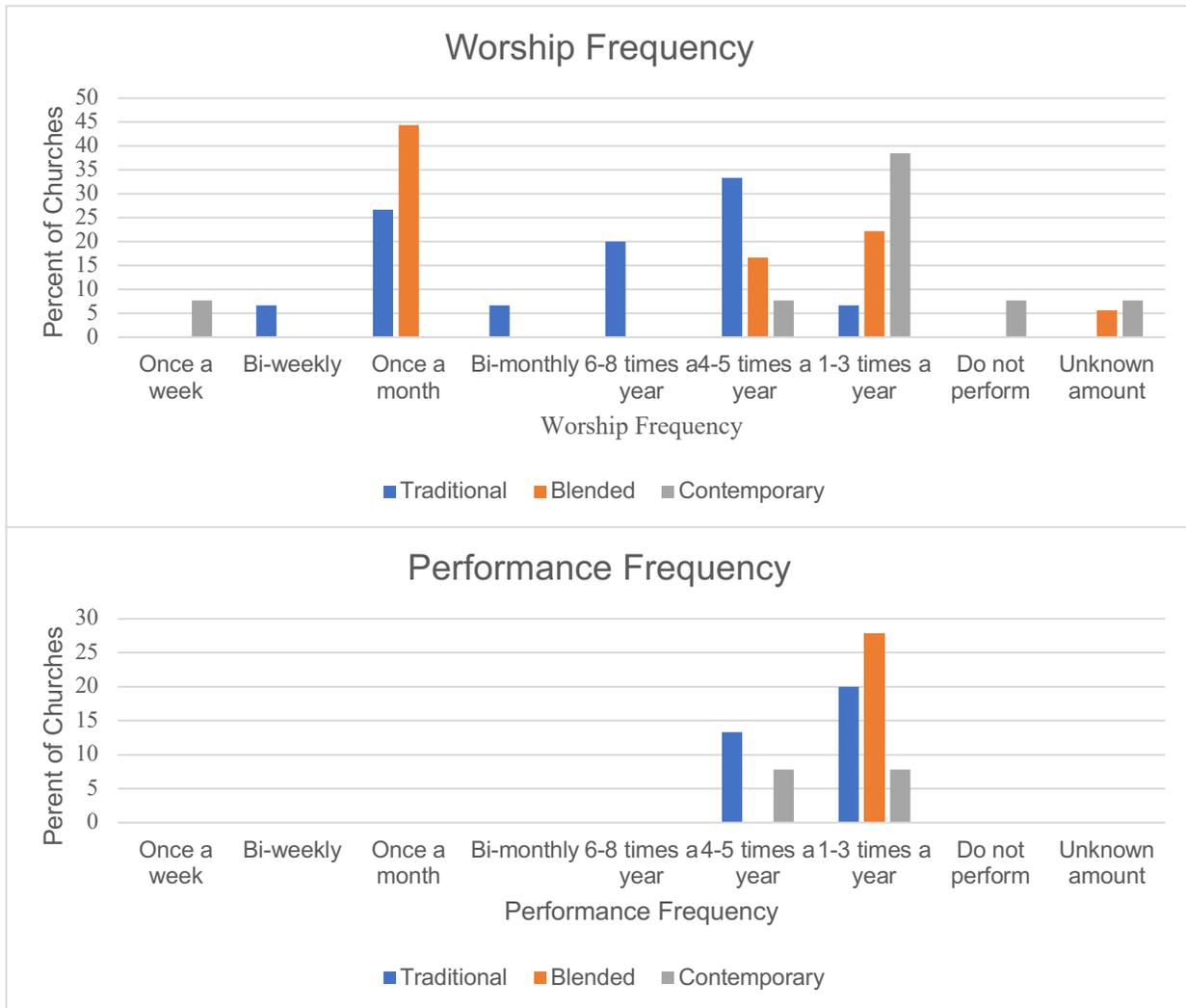


Figure 5. Worship and performance frequency. This figure portrays the amount that each style of worship leads worship and performs.

The final question asked about the structure of the program was “What (if any) is the dress code or the uniforms for your children’s choir?” The researcher coded the answers into the

following categories: church appropriate, choir robes/cassocks, T-shirt/polo shirt, specified colors, costume, and variety. The most used form of uniform in traditional churches is choir robes or cassocks (53.3%). Closely following is church appropriate clothing (46.7%). The majority of blended churches (52.9%) and contemporary churches (50%) have a dress code of church appropriate clothing. The second most used form of uniform in contemporary churches is T-shirts/polo shirts (40%).

### **Music Literacy**

The music literacy questions gave an overview of music literacy within the children's choir rehearsal. The first question asked if music was taught by reading music or by rote singing. Rote singing is defined as hearing a melody and repeating it back. Traditional choirs focus more on reading music as a method of learning music, where as a majority of blended and contemporary churches learn music by rote singing. 46.7% of traditional children's choirs learn by reading music, compared to 17.6% of blended churches and 20% of contemporary churches. 50% of contemporary churches and 71% of blended churches learn by rote singing.

Respondents were asked to rank the importance of teaching theory within their rehearsals on a scale from 1 to 10. Overall, more traditional churches believe it was important to teach theory. For the purpose of this study, the researcher determined any answer above a 6 to be "of high importance," 4-5 to be "somewhat important," and anything lower than a 4 to be "unimportant." Of the answers given, 50% of traditional churches determine theory to be of high importance within the rehearsal, 21% believe it is somewhat important, 28.5% believe it is unimportant." 31.3% of blended churches said it is highly important, 37.5% reported it is unimportant, and 31.3% said it is somewhat important. Of contemporary churches, 9.1% said teaching theory is highly important, 27.3% said it is somewhat important, and 63.6% said it is

unimportant. More contemporary churches believe teaching theory is unimportant than traditional or blended churches, whereas more traditional churches believe it is important than other styles of worship. Figure 6 displays the compared percentages of importance.

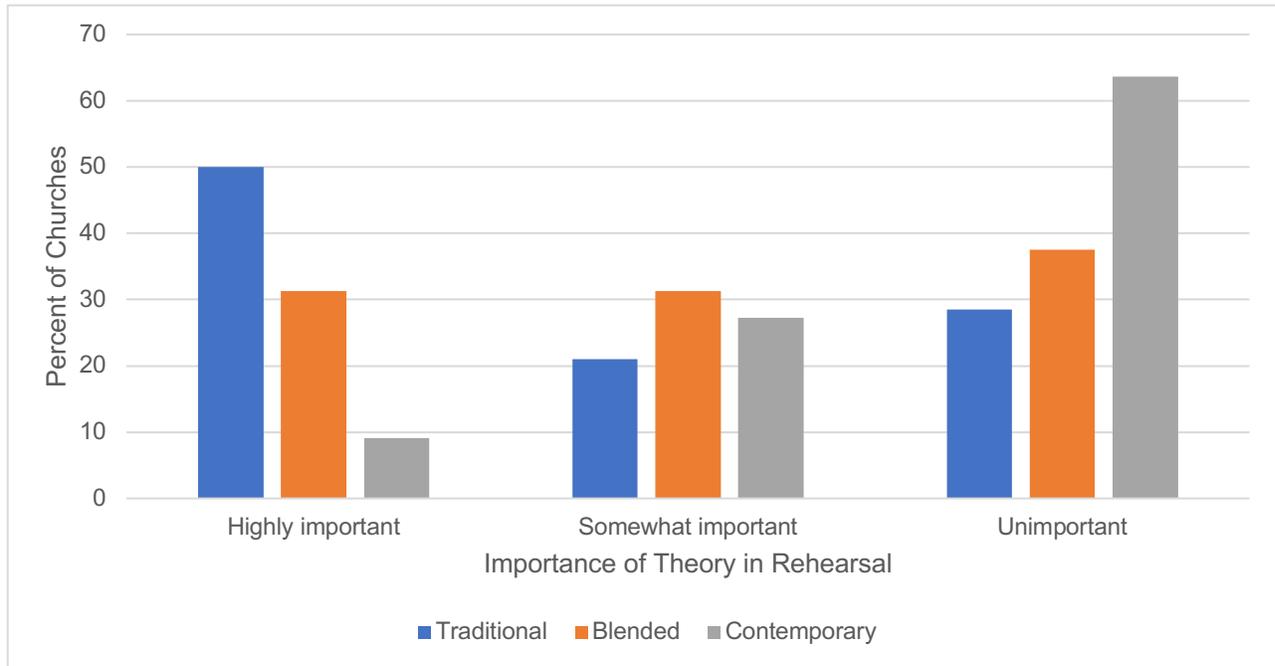


Figure 6. Importance of theory in rehearsal. This figure displays how important directors thought theory was within the rehearsal.

Each respondent also was asked to provide the way in which they teach theory within their rehearsal. Table 2 displays the ways in which respondents are teaching theory.

Table 2

*Ways in Which Theory is Taught*

Method	Traditional	Blended	Contemporary
<b>By Style of Worship</b>			
Through repertoire	60%	52.9%	30%
Pictures/posters	6.7%	5.8%	0%
Note values/chords	6.7%	17.6%	10%
Music, not repertoire	6.7%	5.8%	0%

During warm up	0%	0%	5.8%
Games/activities	20%	11.8%	0%
Hand signs/solfege	20%	11.8%	0%
Summer camps	0%	5.8%	0%
Instrument use	6.7%	0%	0%
Manipulatives/handouts	13.3%	0%	0%
None or n/a	0%	0%	70%

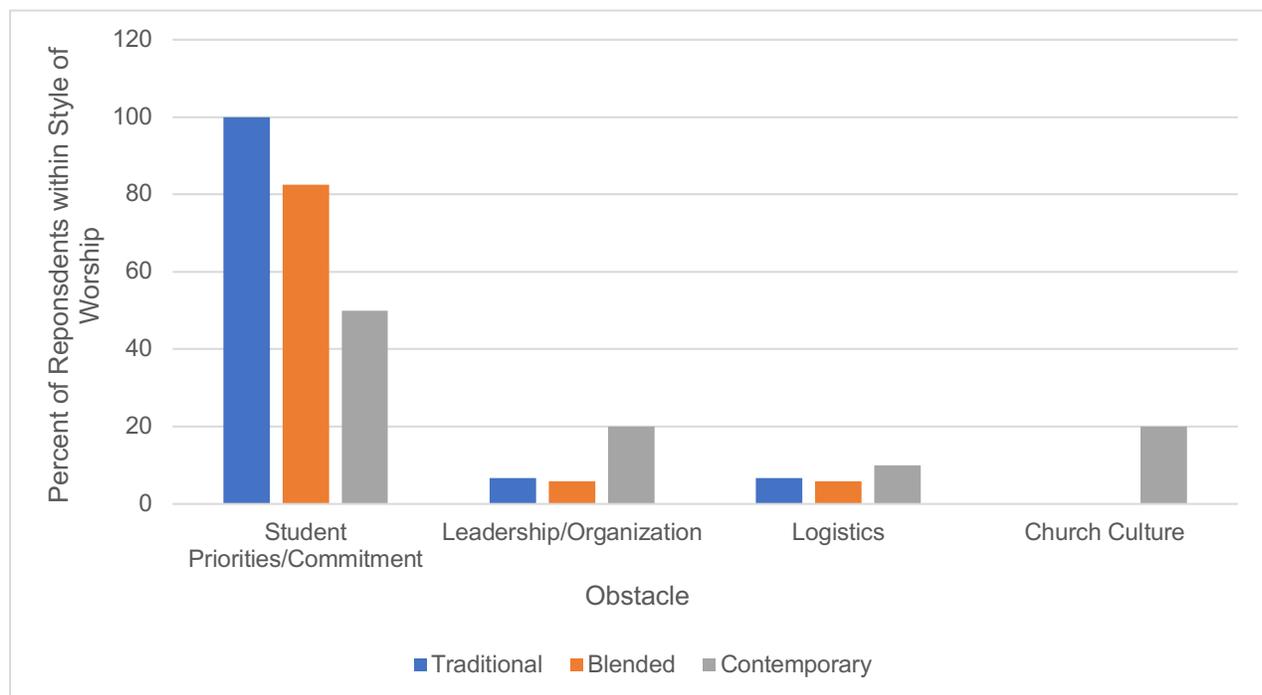
Each respondent was asked to provide where they found their literature. The researcher coded their answer choices into the categories as seen in Appendix B. Contemporary churches use far fewer resources in order to find literature than other styles of worship, and mostly use online resources (30% of contemporary churches). The most popular resource used in traditional sources is *Chorister's Guild* (67.7%), and the most popular in blended churches is directly from publishers (76.5%).

Not only were respondents asked to provide their sources of literature, but they were also asked to provide three examples of musical selections performed by their children's choir within the past year. Appendix C provides a detailed list of the repertoire examples—the appendix has been split into choral music and contemporary music. The only choral examples that contemporary churches provided were musicals. All other contemporary churches responded with contemporary music examples, as expected by the researcher. 61.5% of choral music was performed by traditional churches, and 32% was performed by blended churches.

### **Purpose and Focus**

The final style of question determined the overall reasoning and obstacles for children's choirs. The first of which was *from your perspective, what are the biggest obstacles to growing the children's choir program in your church setting?* The researcher coded the respondents'

answers into four categories: student priorities/commitment, leadership/organization, logistics, and church culture. Despite the style of worship, the majority of churches' obstacles have to do with student priorities and commitment—traditional (100%), blended (82.4%), contemporary (55.6%). Church culture was an obstacle only found within contemporary churches but was found within 22% of contemporary churches. Another of the obstacles found only within contemporary churches was the logistics of children's choirs within multi-campus churches. 6.7% of traditional churches determined that leadership/organization is an obstacle to their choirs, specifically finding quality programming for worship and performances. Figure 7 displays the church responses within the four categories.



*Figure 7.* Children's choir obstacles. This figure illustrates the obstacles each style of worship faces within a children's choir.

The final two questions of the survey asked about the purpose and focus of the children's choir. By far, traditional churches (52.3%) focus more on teaching singing and literature than

blended (17.6%) and contemporary (20%) churches. The most important focus to blended (29.4%) and contemporary (20%) churches is using music to worship God; 26.7% of traditional churches focus on learning and nurturing their faith. Contemporary churches have the highest response rate of “fun.” Traditional churches were the only style of worship that did not respond that performance opportunities were a focus, whereas 11.8% of blended churches did and 10% of contemporary churches did.

The overall most-stated purpose of children’s choirs was to love music and worship, and to learn how to worship. 40% of traditional churches’ most important focus was to nurture the faith of the children. Only 10% of contemporary churches believe teaching music was part of the purpose of their choir, while 26.7% of traditional churches and 23.5% of blended churches did.

Table 3 shows the breakdown of children’s choir purpose within each style of worship.

Table 3

*Purpose of Children’s Choir*

Purpose	Traditional	Blended	Contemporary
Love music and worship/ Learn to worship	26.7%	41.2%	60%
Use gifts	6.7%	23.5%	0%
Teach music	26.7%	23.5%	10%
Teach voice	13.3%	5.9%	0%
Involvement in church	53.3%	29.4%	40%
Participate in worship	20%	5.9%	0%
Leadership	20%	11.8%	40%
Community	13.3%	5.9%	0%
Glorify God	6.7%	11.8%	10%
Ministry	0%	5.9%	10%
Nurture of faith	40%	5.9%	20%

Outreach	0%	11.8%	10%
Training	0%	5.9%	0%
Safe place	20%	0%	0%
Express emotion	13.3%	0%	0%

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### Discussion

To interpret the findings from this study, the following discussion addresses the four categories individually, followed by comments regarding the overall survey results.

The results from the *Church Background* survey section provided a background knowledge of the churches that responded. For example, overall, the majority of the churches were mostly white and mostly not of Hispanic or Latino origin. This is reflected in the demographics of the DFW area. 47.1% of residents identify as white, 28.6% identify as Hispanic, and 15.2% identify as African-American (Data USA: Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX Metro Area). The number of respondents from each style of worship decreased from traditional to contemporary. Because an equal number of churches were reached out to, the fact that fewer blended and contemporary churches responded could indicate that traditional churches have more administrative employees that communicate with outside personnel, more contemporary churches that did not have children's choirs did not feel that the survey would apply to them, or that more traditional churches had emails to answer consistently. As the researcher hypothesized, more traditional churches had children's choirs than blended and contemporary churches. In the increase of contemporary churches, many contemporary churches no longer have a choir, but "praise bands" (Phillips, 2007). Because of this, they have no need for a children's choir to feed the adult choir. However, traditional churches that have adult choirs

have a greater need for children's choirs, in order to both to teach the younger generations and to raise them up to feed the adult choir.

The results from the *Children's Choir Structure* section provided an overview of the differences in children's choirs between each style of worship. The only churches that had children worship leaders were contemporary churches, in which a praise band is more common. Similar to the structure of churches with children's choirs, churches that have praise bands would more than likely train the children of the church in the style of worship they participate in.

The churches, despite the style of worship, overall had the same range of ages for their children's choirs. Because of the ages of children, this is not surprising. Children do not change ages simply because of a worship style. The number of students in a children's choir varied almost equally despite the different styles of worship. This was more dependent on the size of the church and the ability to overcome the obstacle of student participation due to conflicts. Traditional choirs had the highest percentage of choirs that met for rehearsal once a week. Contemporary churches had the lowest amount of consist rehearsals with their children's choir, meaning less importance is placed on consistent rehearsals for music training. Not only do traditional churches rehearse more frequently and consistently, they also lead worship more consistently than both blended and contemporary children's choirs. A higher percentage of traditional and blended churches lead worship at all during the year than contemporary churches, seeming to place a higher importance on leadership than in contemporary services. However, this is incongruent with the responses of what each church said their children's choir's purpose was. Again, traditional churches had the highest percentage of performances outside of the church service, highlighting that their focus is more on music literacy, singing and choir than blended or contemporary services.

The *Music Literacy* section of the survey contained some of the greatest differences between the styles of worship. Overall, traditional choirs learned by actually learning to read written music, whereas blended and contemporary churches taught music through rote singing. This difference alone establishes a clear distinction between children's music literacy skills within different styles of worship. "Music literacy" refers to the ability to read notation (International Kodaly Society). Students that learn solely through rote singing are missing a crucial aspect of musicality—they are not learning how to actually read music. The importance each style of worship placed on teaching theory yielded similar results. Traditional churches ranked the importance much higher and provided more teaching methods for theory than contemporary and blended churches. This shows that the more traditional the church, the better musical training children receive. More of the contemporary churches provide their children with no music literacy training; therefore, these children will have no music training before entering school like the children in more traditional churches will.

Not only were they asked about the actual music literacy training within the classroom, they were also asked about where they find their literature and repertoire examples. Overall, because of the focus on music literacy more so within the traditional and blended churches than the contemporary churches, it was no surprise that more of their literature came from publishers, Chorister's Guild, music libraries, and other venues to find choral music. More of the contemporary churches found their literature online or other places that do not necessarily produce choral music.

Finally, the *Purpose and Focus* section of the survey provided an overview of children's choirs around the DFW area. The overarching obstacle was student priorities and commitment. A majority of the churches mentioned scheduling conflicts and students placing priorities on extra-

curricular activities or sports. They mentioned the current society's lack of church priority. Because we are seeing a growth in megachurches, it was interesting, but not surprising that contemporary churches mentioned the logistics of having a choir at a multi-campus church. A few contemporary churches also mentioned the idea that a children's choir would not fit in with the "church culture" as they are serving a younger congregation, following the lack of classical training and listeners in society.

The most important purpose of a children's choir to both blended and contemporary churches was to learn to worship and love to worship through music. The most important purpose within the traditional churches was active involvement within the church, closely followed by the nurture of faith. Although they are slightly different, all of the choirs' purposes were inherently to grow students in the church and teach them to worship and follow God. However, more traditional and blended churches also mentioned the teaching of music more than contemporary churches, further exemplifying that the more contemporary the style of worship, the less musical training children receive within the church.

### **Implications**

Research on the lack of choral training within contemporary churches is congruent with the findings of this survey. More of the contemporary churches had fewer choirs and less music literacy training within the choral rehearsals. This new dichotomy between contemporary and traditional churches poses the question: Will this popular-style of music replace the need for traditional choral training, thereby replacing the need for children's choir? If the answer is yes, the lack of children's choirs will also lead to a depreciation in the training of music literacy children receive before attending school.

This survey provided an overview of churches within the DFW area and the choral training that children receive within different styles of worship. This overview allows these churches to look at how others are teaching music, literacy, and theory within their rehearsals, as well as, gives churches without a children's choir an idea of how to create a successful program. The findings of this survey also highlight the possible need for the creation of a separate curriculum for contemporary and some blended children's choir to teach music literacy and theory within the rehearsal while still staying true to their own style of worship. This kind of a curriculum would allow churches to sing the music of their choosing while still teaching fundamental music ideas.

### **Limitations**

This study presented many limitations. First, the number of churches that received the survey link was limited due to the manual selection of the churches. Because of this, the researcher was unable to collect a complete sample of all churches within the DFW area. Second, the time constraint of two weeks limited the descriptive statistics within the results. If more time had been given, a larger number of respondents may have been able to participate yielding a more accurate set of results. Finally, the researcher did not have a personal relationship with the respondents in order to maintain confidentiality of results. Although the researcher stated this many times, there is a chance that respondents did not answer with complete honesty for fear of confidentiality not being maintained.

### **Future Research**

The findings of this study reveal the differences between the styles of worship in regard to music literacy and children's choirs. Future research should focus on a wider range of participants and more directly on the music literacy portion to determine what is exactly being

taught within the rehearsals. Research should focus on how to create and teach successful children's choirs within a blended and contemporary church setting, while still maintaining their own style of worship. The further question for this research within the contemporary setting specifically should be: how can we teach music literacy and theory within the popular-style contemporary music, so that students in these style churches get the same opportunities for music literacy that those in a traditional children's choir do?

Future research could include what students should learn within the church choir setting, as well as, what curriculum is most beneficial in different settings. After deciding what is standard for children to learn, future research could include the development of a children's choir curriculum that has multiple facets—one for each style of worship: traditional, blended, and contemporary.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to document the structure of children's choirs, their instructional practices and performances in churches with traditional, contemporary, and combined traditional/contemporary worship styles. The results of this survey made it possible to discern trends and differences between the different style of worship.

The findings of the survey indicate that more contemporary churches not only believe teaching music literacy and theory within the rehearsal are less important, but also have much fewer children's choirs than traditional and blended churches. If this trend continues along with a growth in contemporary churches, children's choirs will continue to dwindle until there is no need for them within the church setting.

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## Appendix A:

### Survey

#### Consent Agreement

By checking yes, you are stating that you have read and agree to all of the following information.

**Title of Research:** Children's Choirs in a Variety of Church Settings

**Funding Agency/Sponsor:** N/A

**Study Investigators:**

Dr. Laura Singletary, Associate Professor, School of Music

Olivia Owens, John V. Roach Honors Candidate, School of Music

**What is the purpose of the research?**

The purpose of this study is to document children's choir programs, their instructional practices, and performances in churches with traditional, contemporary, and combined traditional and contemporary worship services.

**How many people will participate in this study?**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of 50 people in this research study.

**What is my involvement for participating in this study? If you agree to be in the study, we will ask you to do the following things:**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to fill out an electronic survey about children's choir within the church that you serve at.

**How long am I expected to be in this study for and how much of my time is required?**

This survey should take no longer than ten to fifteen minutes to complete. After completion, no more time will be expected of you.

**What are the risks to me for participating in this study and how will they be minimized?**

This study is a minimal risk project. The only risk is the identification of confidential survey results due to granularity of the sample. To prevent such risks, surveys will be sent anonymously and no attempts to find out identities will be made.

**What are the benefits for participating in this study?**

This study will add to the body knowledge regarding children's choir in a variety of church settings. It will also add to the body of knowledge regarding different methods of teaching children's choirs.

**Will I be compensated for participating in this study?**

You will not receive a payment for your participation. You will not be responsible for any costs to participate in this study.

**What is an alternate procedure(s) that I can choose instead of participating in this study?**

There are no known alternatives available to you other than not taking part in this study. However, any significant new findings developed during the course of the research which may relate to your willingness to continue participation will be provided to you.

**How will my confidentiality be protected?**

Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study records, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Your records may be reviewed by authorized University or other individuals who will be bound by the same provisions of confidentiality. After recording the data, the researcher will store survey responses in a password-protected file on the PI's computer (owned by TCU and password protected through TCU protections) until the study is complete (through potential publication, minimum 3 years), and data will not be accessed. After all research is complete, files will be destroyed.

**Is my participation voluntary?**

Participation in this study is voluntary.

**Can I stop taking part in this research?**

You may stop taking part in this research at any time.

**What are the procedures for withdrawal?**

To discontinue, stop answering questions and close your browser.

**Who should I contact if I have questions regarding the study?**

Dr. Laura Singletary

**Who should I contact if I have concerns regarding my rights as a study participant?**

Dr. Michael Faggella-Luby, Chair, TCU Institutional Review Board, (817) 257-4355, m.faggella-luby@tcu.edu; or Ms. Lorrie Branson, JD, TCU Research Integrity Officer, (817) 257-4266, l.branson@tcu.edu.

- Yes, I have read and agree to the above information.
- No, I do not consent to be a part of this survey.

What is the congregation size of the church?

- 0-100
- 100-500
- 500-1,500
- 1,500-3,000
- 3,000 or more

How would you characterize the *primary* racial demographic of your congregation?

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

What denomination is the church?

What style of worship do you participate in?

- Traditional
- Blended - some traditional/some contemporary
- Contemporary

How would you characterize the *primary* ethnicity of your congregation?

- Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin
- Not Hispanic or Latino or Spanish Origin

Describe your personal role in the church music program, including how often you sing/perform/lead congregation.

Does your church have a children's choir program?

- Yes
- For certain occasions
- Children worship leaders
- No

Please describe the structure of your children's choir program. Include information about what ages are allowed to participate, and about any requirements or prerequisites for participation.

How often does your children's choir meet?

- Once a week
- A few times a month
- Twice a month
- A few times a year
- Occasionally - random times
- Not applicable

How many students do you typically have in your children's choir?

- 1-10
- 10-20
- 20-40
- 40-60
- More than 60
- Not applicable

Where do you find your literature?

If possible, give three examples of musical selections performed by your children's choir in the last year (title and composer/arranger).

Is there a focus on reading music in your children's choir program, or is the emphasis on rote singing?

- Reading music
- Rote singing
- Other
- Not applicable

How often does the children's choir perform, and in what setting?

What (if any) is the dress code or the uniforms for your children's choir?

From your perspective, what are the biggest obstacles to growing the children's choir program in your church setting?

How do you, if at all, teach music theory within your rehearsals?

On a scale of 1 to 10, 1 being the least important, how important is it to teach music theory to you within children's choir?

What is the purpose of your children's choir?

What is the focus of your children's choir?

**Appendix B:**  
**Literature Sources**

Literature Source	Traditional	Blended	Contemporary
Hymnal	26.7%	5.9%	0%
Chorister's Guild	67.7%	29.4%	0%
Choral Public Domain	6.7%	0%	0%
Chant repertoire	6.7%	0%	0%
Taize	6.7%	0%	0%
Growing in Grace	26.7%	5.9%	0%
Unwritten music	0%	0%	10%
Online resources	20%	11.8%	30%
Youtube	0%	5.9%	0%
Google	0%	0%	10%
Music library	46.7%	17.7%	0%
Own composition	6.7%	17.7%	0%
Publishers	60%	76.5%	20%
Brentwood/Benson	0%	5.9%	0%
Word Music	0%	17.6%	0%
Lifeway Music	0%	17.6%	20%
Hal Leonard	0%	5.9%	0%
Catholic Publishing	6.7%	0%	0%
Hope Publishing	6.7%	0%	0%
Ausburg Fortress	6.7%	0%	0%

Prism	0%	5.9%	0%
Church Publishing Group	6.7%	0%	0%
Paraclete Press	6.7%	0%	0%
St. James Music Press	6.7%	0%	0%
MorningStar	6.7%	0%	0%
JW Pepper	6.7%	17.6%	0%
Littlebigstuff	0%	0%	20%
Conventions	13.3%	11.8%	0%
Singabration	0%	5.9%	0%
Gospel Music Workshop of America	0%	5.9%	0%
Music store	6.7%	5.9%	0%
Pender's	0%	5.9%	0%
Listening stations	0%	11.7	0%
Recommendations	0%	0%	10%
My First Hymnal	0%	5.9%	0%
Church Music Institute	6.7%	0%	0%
N/A	0%	0%	40%

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**Appendix C:**  
**Repertoire Selection**

<b>Choral Music</b>		<b>Contemporary Music</b>	
<b>Title</b>	<b>Arranger/Composer</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Artist</b>
A Midnight Clear	Richard Storrs Willis	All My Hope	David Crowder
A Million Dreams	Mac Huff	Everlasting God	
A Pirate's Adventure	Celeste and David Clydesdale	Glory, Glory Hallelujah	
A Play in a Manger (Musical)	Littlebigstuff	Holy is the Lamb of God	Youth for Christ
A Prayer of St. Richard of Chichester	L.J. White	I Know that My God is God	
A Technicolor Promise (Musical)_	Allen Pote and Tom Long	I'm a Child of the King	
Austrian Carol	Black	I'm Beautiful	Jekalyn Carr
Batid las Manos!	Mark Burrows	Jesus	Chris Tomlin
Be Watchful, Be Ready	John Behnke	Jesus, Joy of the Highest Heaven	Keith and Kristin Getty
Born Again Identity (Musical)	Littlebigstuff	Lay Em Down	Needtobreathe
Camel Lot (Musical)	Littlebigstuff	Let's Praise Today	
Candlelight Carol	John Rutter	Love Come Down	NorthPoint Inside Out
Celebrate the Birth of Jesus	David Ray	Medleys found on Youtube	
Christmas Anthems	Michael Bedfore	Noel	Kari Jobe
Come with a Grateful Heart	Bailey/Mayo	Oh, What a Special Night	Treehouse Kids Club
Count the Stars	Andy Beck	Silent Night	Hillsong
Danny and the Shacks (Musical)	Littlebigstuff	Touch the Sky	Hillsong
Donkey Tales (Musical)	Kathie Hill	Trust in You	Lauren Daigle
Everywhere I Go	Natalie Sleeth	We Wish You a Merry Christmas	
Faith News (Musical)	Christie Semsen	What a Beautiful Name	Hillsong
Glory to the Newborn King	Bradley Knight	What a Friend We Have in Jesus	Hymn by Scriven, Converse
Glow	Eric Whitacre	Whom Shall I Fear	Chris Tomlin
Go Down Moses	Thomas Keesecker	Wonderful (Psalm 139)	Door Post Songs

God Loves Me Dearly from <i>My First Hymnal</i>	Concordia Publishing House
Goliath	Joseph Martin
Good News	David Clydesdale
Grant, O God, Your Blessing on Us	Michael Bedford
Hear My Words	Stephen Paulus
Holy Light Cantata	Robert Hobby
Hosanna to the Son	Jody Lindh
I Can Do All Things	Mark Burrows
I'm Gonna Sing	Ronald Anderson
In a Galilee Far, Far Away (Musical)	Littlebigstuff
Jubilate Deo	Michael Bedford
Keep Me as the Apple of Your Eye	Kenneth Kosche
Let There Be Peace on Earth	Phil Nitz
Light One Candle	Mark Patterson
Lo, He Comes	John Horman
Lord, We Are Your People	Mark Patterson
Lord, You Know Me Completely	Hal Hopson
Love One Another	John Horman
Love the Lord	Dennis and Nan Allen
Love the Lord	Jeff Reeves
Lullaby, Holy One	Terry Taylor
Magnificat	Glenda Robinson
My America	Joyce Eilers
O Lord, Hear my Prayer	Taize
Oh, How I Love Jesus	Fredrick Whifield
Oh, Sing to the Lord	John Helgen
On Christmas Night	Jody Lindh
Prepare Ye the Way	Mark Burrows

Psallite!	Mary Lynn Lightfoot
Psalm 100	Kenney Potter
Psalm 121	Michael Bedford
Psalm 121 from <i>Psalm for Children</i>	Chorister Guild
Psalm 51	Jett Cheek
Puttin' On the Ritz	Kirby Shaw
Shepherd Boy (Musical)	Charlotte Algozin
Sing Hosanna!	Charles McCartha
Sing Praises to the Lord	Ruth Elaine Schram
Sing to the Lord	Nancy Raabe
Sing, Dance Children of God	Vickie Hancock Wright
Small Deeds	John Horman
Somebody's Talkin' 'bout Jesus	Taylor
Straight Outta Bethlehem (Musical)	Word, Christey, and Daniel Semsen
Thank You, Soldiers	M. Souders
The Children of Christmas	Bradley Knight
The Fruit of the Spirit	Becki Slagle Mayo
The Lord Bless You and Keep You	John Rutter
The Lord is My Light	Michael Bedford
The Night Shift Before Christmas (Musical)	Littlebigstuff
This is My Father's World	Brad Nix
Treasures in Heaven	Messick
Wave Your Branches	Thomas Pavlechkn
What a Wonderful World	Weiss/Thiele
When I Turn My Heart to Heaven	Joseph Martin
Who Will Keep God's Lambs?	Greg Gilpin