

# Using Music in Secular Ministry Settings

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As the Christian gospel is demonstrated in mission settings, music is an invaluable tool. It is an expression of worship, a means of recreation and therapy, an avenue for evangelism, and a vehicle for teaching many things. It takes diligence and creativity to select, learn, and effectively utilize good music in missions. Here are some things to consider.

Why use music as a tool in missions?

For evangelism, proclamation, and witnessing (individual and group expression.

For ministry, enjoyment, entertainment, therapy, relaxation, inclusive activity.

For fellowship, community, sharing, group involvement, expression.

For worship, meditation, Bible study, and discipleship.

Where can music be used in missions settings?

Campgrounds, campsites

Beaches

City and county parks

Hiking trails

Hotels and motels, community rooms, recreation areas, pools, etc.

Marinas

Theme and amusement parks

Fairs—state, county, parish, regional, street fairs, and carnivals

Arts and crafts festivals, community festivals, and events

Flea markets

Rallies—camping, motorcycle

Sports and racing events

Marketplace and shopping areas

Restaurants and lounges

Parades

Conventions, expositions, and trade shows

How can mission programs and activities utilize music?

Family evening programs (blend of secular and religious)

Campfire programs

Worship services

Concerts

Street musicians

Puppet shows

Day camps

Big A clubs, Backyard Bible Clubs, Mission Vacation Bible School

Christian dinner theater

Christian boat cruises

Talent shows

Musical dramas

Clowning

Christmas caroling

What music is appropriate to use in missions?

Music that suits your mission purposes—entertainment, worship, teaching, backup, hiking, and exercise

Music that has meaning to a particular individual or group (age, culture, activity)

Music which people like and enjoy—even classical!

Music that you know and can perform, teach, or lead

Music that suits the setting—informal atmosphere, audience composition, type of facility, and personnel involved

What types of music can be used in mission settings?

Worship—hymns, gospel hymns, gospel songs, praise choruses, and Scripture songs

Children's—teaching, Bible songs, and living skills

Fun—action, humorous, and recreational

Adult—songs from earlier years

Youth—contemporary pop, rock, and folk

Background music for mimes, clowns, magic and illusion, dance, and aerobics

What styles or topics may be appropriate?

Barbershop

Beach music

Bluegrass

Camping and trail

Country and western

Early American or pioneer  
Environmental or meditational  
Ethnic  
Folk  
Gospel  
Indian  
Jazz  
Jug band  
Mountain  
Nature or animals  
Patriotic  
Rap  
Reggae  
Rock  
Seasonal (Christmas, Easter, fourth of July)  
Sports

What forms of music are possible?

Choral  
Instrumental  
Solos  
Vocal ensemble

How can indigenous music be used most effectively in the missions settings?

Find music that is part of the local culture such as mountain, country and western, or island.

Learn and perform it seriously and on par with local musicians.

Present it as entertainment for your outreach program, followed by similar Christian music or meaningful interpretation.

At a special event, use songs that relate to the theme, setting, or history of the event.

How does the missionary relate to music in missions?

As a musician:

Personal involvement in the music culture of the community.

Through relationships with local musicians.

Use your talent in performance in missions settings.

Leading in worship in missions settings.

As a teacher or trainer:

With local musicians, performers, worship leaders, and outreach personnel.

With summer missionaries, Sojourners, and Innovators.

Working with missions youth groups and leaders.

As a facilitator:

With visiting music groups and individual musicians

As a part of the missions/music team in the church, association, and denomination

What about performance in mission settings?

1. Use types of music that people enjoy and find meaningful. Consider their ages, geographic location, home states and towns, culture, ethnicity, and the purpose of their presence with you.
2. Judge your performance time, length of program, and placement in your program of your music.
3. Evaluate your visual aspects—staging, costumes, lines of vision, and movement. What are you communicating?
4. Evaluate your audio aspects—clarity, volume, lip sync, blend, balance of accompaniment and voice, and proper use of audiotapes.
5. Do quality performances using local groups, as well as visiting groups or individuals.
6. Do not use offensive songs—those referring to handicap, ethnic, cultural, age, or gender stereotypes and slurs.
7. Require visiting groups to send you a tape containing their typical music and performance styles.

What are some worship music suggestions?

1. Use the appealing aspects of your setting to capitalize on the worship experience. Design your service to suit the natural setting, the location's history, or some special feature that would strengthen your relationship and communion with God.
2. Try to design your service around a theme. Use Scripture and music to support the theme.
3. Find music common to the majority of your congregation.
4. Use the best music you can, and do it well.
5. Use a variety of music selections.
6. Use instruments, amplification systems, and tape players practical for your setting.
7. Deal with the many types of distractions to your worship by avoiding, removing, or reducing them.
8. Utilize unrehearsed musicians from your mission setting with caution and tact. Some will be suitable if you have time to work with them.

9. Be very careful that you do not break any copyright laws in printing material for use in worship. Permission must be obtained for much of the duplication of song texts that you may want to use. For information on a license to use copyrighted materials, write to Christian Copyright Licensing, Inc., 17201 N.E. Sacramento St., Portland, Ore. 97230-5914.

How do you lead singing?

1. Know your songs. Memorize them if at all possible.
2. Choose songs that are easy to sing or to learn and to understand.
3. Balance your choice of familiar and new songs.
4. Use brief verbal introductions to songs to set the mood of the selection.
5. Choose the key and pitch of your song to suit the group. Young children have a range of about 5 notes. Teenagers have changing voices. Adults prefer the octave based on middle C. Older adults prefer the octave from A to A.
6. Decide how to teach the song. Consider several ways. Try it out on your friends or family.
7. For each song decide whether it would be best to use hand signals to illustrate pitch (up and down) or meter (4/4, 3/4, 6/8, etc.).
8. Do not reinforce that the best singing in worship is loud and full. Remember that the congregation is not singing for you or each other, but for God.
9. Enjoy the music that you select and use.

What are some other practical aspects of music to consider?

1. Personnel: Who should be recruited? Who will supervise them?
2. Equipment (purchase, maintenance, care, and use): What should we buy, rent, or borrow? Who will take care of it?
3. Acoustics and setting: How does the setting or facility affect how the music should be produced?
4. Supplies: Do we need music scores, programs, tapes, props, etc.?
5. Finances: What will all of this cost? How much is the budget?
6. Training: Do the musicians, technicians, and others need specific training?
7. Personal repertoire: What can I do musically?
  - (a) Keep lists of all types of songs that you know and where they can be found.
  - (b) Practice, practice, practice!
  - (c) Memorize regularly. Perform often.
  - (d) Keep a growing edge. Always be learning an instrument, a new conducting pattern, keyboard technique, etc.

Who can help me?

Missionaries who deal with music programming in mission settings.

Local music teachers or musicians who are willing share their knowledge, skill, and advice with you.

Church and associational music directors and musicians who are in touch with your situation. Ask if you may read some of their magazines or books that relate to music in outreach. Ask for their input.

Music leaders in the Baptist state conventions who are interested in outreach ministries. North American Mission Board resource personnel and music consultants at LifeWay Christian Resources and other publishers.

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