

REPORT ON CHURCH MUSIC IN GENERAL IN OUR ELCSA (N-T) 2017

“The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through music” (Luther) – this is the challenge each congregation faces – how can we best declare His Word through music? The varied musical talents in the choir, brass-band and contemporary groups are witness to the fact that the WORD is ‘carried’ in different styles within our congregations. It is therefore essential to identify, nurture and develop this gift within the context of each congregation as well as on Circuit and Synod level, all to the glory of God.

The reports on church music that I received were numerous and most enlightening – I appreciate the detail that was provided – this includes the challenges being faced and ideas for growth within congregations and on Synod level. It is impossible to include everything in this report, but I hope that the most important aspects will become clear.

The Brass Band and Choir Association Festivals as well as the Circuit Festivals, are generally well attended and musicians return into their respective congregations strengthened and motivated to continue praising God with their talents in their home congregations. Conducting courses offered by the Brass Association (see BRASS REPORT) have been successfully introduced and similar courses are being developed for the Choir Association (see CHOIR REPORT) and for Organists (a need mentioned by numerous congregations). These are all vital in equipping interested musicians with the necessary skills to be used at congregational level and beyond. The “IMPACT MUSIC MINISTRY” (see REPORT-Southern Circuit) – formally known as “Contemporary Music Ministry”, is offering biannual Workshops and biennial Festivals. This ministry is growing in popularity in different congregations throughout our Synod. It is essential to develop leaders, musicians (playing piano/keyboard and many different orchestral instruments) and extending their repertoire using various sources, is also evident in the reports. These necessities are best met at Circuit level through Workshops, where “trying out and learning new songs”, “fellowship...is uplifting and encouraging” and learning from “more experienced congregations” can occur. Learning to play an instrument (or singing) and to read and write (theory) music is a blessing for your congregation and yourself – be courageous, it’s never too late! Luther said: “Music is one of the fairest and most glorious gifts of God” - encouraging the children/youth to appreciate and make music should be a priority in every congregation. As parents and grandparents, we can encourage *learners* to enrol at schools where music is offered as a subject or an extra subject and the *youth* to attend Rüstwoche, where making music together is such a positive experience! (Hermannsburg is one of the few private Co-ed Schools that offer music as a subject.)

The musicians of our congregations practise regularly, predominantly on Sundays before the service, unless they are part of a group playing in specific services on an ad hoc basis. It is wonderful to note that smaller congregations make an effort to celebrate church festivals (ie. Christmas, Easter, Pentecost etc.) by incorporating additional music items and accompanying hymns and songs. The Data projector (capella, Easyworship software) is used more widely in services together with books (EG, LH, own books/files compiled by congregations) and handouts used for new songs or special occasions. Other sources for songs include: Mission Praise, CD’s (Townend, Robin Mark, Robin Mann and others), Emmaus Book, internet, youtube.

“Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart.” Eph.5:18-19. May we all continue to spread the WORD; using the musical gifts we have received from God, to praise and honour Him.

Connie Ortmann

Church Music