

Music in worship

In Scripture

Psalm 96:1-2

New Revised Standard Version

1 O sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.

2 Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.

Matthew 26.30

When they had sung the hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.



Photo by [David Beale](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Early Church

¹Later, there is a reference in Pliny the Younger who writes to the emperor Trajan (61–113) asking for advice about how to prosecute the Christians in Bithynia, and describing their practice of gathering before sunrise and repeating antiphonally "a hymn to Christ, as to God".

Psychology of collective singing

Singing has also been shown to improve our sense of happiness and well-being. Research has found, for example, that



https://www.instagram.com/p/BwqfoV1Hw___/

people feel more positive after actively singing than they do after passively listening to music or after chatting about positive life events.²

Why Singing Together Is Good For Us³

One reason why music is so powerful and universal. Susan R. Barry Ph.D. About ten years ago, a friend suggested that I join our town's chorale. I like music and have played the piano since age 7, but, for me, piano playing has always been a solitary activity. My father was a very good violinist with a good ear. When I was little and practiced at home, he'd hear every mistake and would shout from anywhere in the house "F sharp" or "B flat!" Sometimes, he stood by the piano while I played and joined in with his violin. But he was such a good musician and so

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_music

² https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/science_of_singing

³ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/au/blog/eyes-the-brain/201309/why-singing-together-is-good-us>

demanding that our playing together just made me nervous. I tried to practice when no one else was around.

But singing with the chorale is completely different. Wednesday night, the night we practice, has become my favorite evening of the week. Even though I don't know most of the other singers well, I feel a strong bond with them. There are times when the singing sends chills down my spine, and all of us singers share in communal feelings of joy.

Often, when we rehearse a new piece, our conductor will indicate when during the song we should all breathe together. I have learned to make a mark, a little comma, on the musical score to indicate when to take in a breath. At first, I thought that the breathing instructions were simply a guide to ensure we had enough air to sing through a passage. But they do more than that. When we breathe together, we bond together, both physically and emotionally.

Theology⁴

Theologian Karl Barth points out that singing is not an option for the people of God; it is one of the essential ministries of the church:

“The Christian church sings. It is not a choral society. Its singing is not a concert. But from inner, material necessity it sings. Singing is the highest form of human expression....What we can and must say quite confidently is that the church which does not sing is not the church. And where...it does not really sing but sighs and mumbles spasmodically, shamefacedly and with an ill grace, it can be at best only a troubled community which is not sure of its cause and of whose ministry and witness there can be no great expectation....The praise of God which finds its concrete culmination in the singing of the community is one of the indispensable forms of the ministry of the church.”

Lenses

[What a friend we have in Jesus](#)

[O Lord hear my prayer](#)

[Way Maker](#)



Brother Roger, founder of the Taizé Community, shown at prayer in 2003

⁴ <https://www.faithward.org/the-theology-and-place-of-music-in-worship/>