



A Ten-Year Look Back: What Has Changed?

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From Postlude to Prelude was published ten years ago. In revising the book, what did I discover that has changed? What has stayed the same? What does the future look like for us who serve the church through music and worship?

How We Got Here (a brief review)

In the last half of the previous century, the center of power shifted from the academy, through the church, to the community.

The 1950s: The Halls of Academia
The 1960s: The Church Basement
The 1970s: Up the Stairs
The 1980s: Now Where To?
The 1990s: In the Sanctuary
The Year 2000 and Beyond: Opening the Doors

Job Titles are Increasingly Inconsistent.

- What do we call our ministry?
- No consensus as to our title or description
 - “Music Minister” might seem too evangelical for some
 - “Worship Leader” doesn’t mention music
 - “Music Director” describes much of our work but admittedly could also be the person in charge of a Broadway musical
 - “Worship and Music Pastor” includes both the words “worship” and “music” but seems to indicate ordination.
 - “Minister of Music and Arts” works for some but omits the word “worship,” and for others assumes a greater involvement of other-than-music artists than most of us encounter.
- Some recent studies have shown that even within denominations, the variety of titles is astounding.
- At the root of this dilemma is the question of what we do and what are our priorities.

Naming Our Discipline Is Challenging.

- What do we call the ministry that we serve – “Music Ministry,” “Worship Ministry,” “Worship and Arts Ministry,” “Music and Worship Ministry?”
- What do we call our field – “Church Music,” “Worship Studies,” “Sacred Music,” “Music and Worship Studies?”
- There is no consensus.

Instrumental Dominance Is Shifting.

- What are the primary instruments that lead us in worship? While many churches still use keyboard instruments (primarily organ, or organ and piano), many others no longer utilize either of these instruments.
- What instruments dominate in congregational song? Our differences are broad.

Vocal Ensembles Are Transitioning.

- What is the primary vocal ensemble that leads congregational song?
- Smaller vocal ensembles have increased, and larger and established choirs have diminished.

Technology Is Assumed.

- To what degree technology is used is variable from church to church, but its use is nearly assumed.
- Very little need to write about it or teach about technology specifically to younger people.
- The role of social media.

Leadership Training Needs Enhancing.

- Every survey that I received regarding the book's revision (and focus groups we've conducted at Baylor), have highlighted the importance of developing more effective leadership skills as we move forward.
- Ministers are realizing that the leadership skills needed to negotiate today's complex world and its people are sometimes lacking in our training and experience.
- People have more problems and they need more help – the world is more complex.

What Hasn't Changed?

We are still spending the “other six days” doing all that we can to impact the lives of those who are entrusted into our ministerial care:

- Planning worship
- Visiting hospitals
- Making purchases
- Writing and rehearsing music
- Organizing musicians into manageable units
- Evaluating our reasons for ministry
- Promoting what we do to others
- Attempting to manage every minute of our days better
- Trying to work effectively with other ministers and congregants.

Gaining Perspective

- We can obsess on all that has changed and what we have lost.
- We can lament that change is too slow and time is running out.
- The core of our field and our ministry is fully intact and hopefully thriving.

Where Are We Going?

- Greater diversity in worship from congregation to congregation.
- Immense variety in worship within a worship gathering.
- More (and more artful) use of technology (technology will lose the trappings of “tech” and just be “the way we do it”) There will be nothing of significance to compare it to.
- Higher appreciation for creative and innovative leaders.
- Emphasis on teams and team building as a primary skill.
- Leadership as “coming along side.”
- Continuing de-emphasis of denominations.
- More ministers with multiple vocations.
- Churches led by core teams with shared responsibilities.
- A complete loss of “style” as a preference. Diversity in music and art forms will be expected and must be modeled.
- The business of church will diminish – both in terms of products and services that serve the church and the model of a church as a business.
- Churches will diminish in size and they will lose more power as an “institution.” They will assume the role of a movement.
- The adherence to the Bible as literal will continue to diminish. The Bible will be viewed in terms of over-arching principles as opposed to the source from which we gain specific answers.
- The church will need leaders who are diverse in outlook and preparation, broadly trained in music and arts, team players, view the world collaboratively, resourceful and imaginative, communicative and articulate.
- “Power” will become an uglier word.
- Leaders who are multilingual and multimusical will be prized.
- “Humility” and “collaboration” will describe the future worship leader.

For more information see:

Bradley, C. Randall (2015). *From Postlude to Prelude: Music Ministry's other Six Days*. Fenton, Mo.: MorningStar Music.

Bradley, C. Randall (2012). *From Memory to Imagination: Reforming the Church's Music*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Pub.