

BLACKWOOD church of christ

Policy 5 VALUES, GUIDELINES & MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR MUSIC AND SINGING

(This policy is currently under review)

Policy Purpose

Music is important to us as a church. It expresses and enriches our experience of God.

There is more to worship than music but music is an important aspect of worship.

Elders feel it is essential that our music and singing ministry be based on and consistent with the core gospel values of inclusivity, generosity, patience, joy, humility, commitment and prayerfulness.

The elders recognise this is best achieved by empowering those involved in music and singing to exercise their gifts with as much freedom and responsibility as possible, always aiming for an increasingly cooperative relationship between musicians, minister(s) and congregation

Like any other public service, Christian ministry brings both privileges and responsibilities

Policy Statement

Experience has shown that there are some guidelines and minimum standards which need to be adhered to if our music ministry is to be fair, well organised and function according to the above values.

· Rehearsal

Any musician or singer who intends to sing or play on the following Sunday morning is expected to attend the pre-arranged rehearsal. Of course, this may not always be possible but as soon as new rosters are distributed it is expected that all musicians and singers check and mark respective dates in their diaries/calendars. All effort should be made to be available on the designated Sunday as well as the rehearsal. If circumstances prevent you from attending either the rehearsal or Sunday service, please notify the keyboardist concerned.

· Music Coordinator

Reviewed August 2015 1 of 5

Responsibility for all musical decisions and choral arrangements ultimately rests with the designated musical coordinator. Of course, opinions and suggestions of everyone involved are to be welcomed and encouraged but the final decision for particular musical arrangements rests with this person set aside for the task. Ideally he/she will delegate particular responsibilities. In the absence of a recognised music coordinator the final decision for particular musical arrangements rests with the keyboard player set down for that day or mutually agreed alternative.

· **Song selection work group**

A group of between 2 and 5 people will be annually endorsed by the elders to choose the songs for services throughout the following year. They will be empowered to creatively and carefully attend to the following:

- Obtain “unavailable dates” from worship team members for the following month (usually by email) prior to the monthly meeting.
- Select songs for Sunday (ideally on a monthly basis) paying attention to the particular styles and abilities of the particular musicians and singers involved.
- Liaise with minister(s) regarding service themes and special requirements.
- Compose and circulate rosters so that musicians and singers know when they are required and when they are not. Rosters are composed by ascertaining availability, working out combinations that work musically (ie. what instruments go with others) and trying to ensure that everyone works with everyone. Combinations and song choices are written on the white board, rosters circulated by email and music folders prepared for all musicians for the month.
- Communicate new songs and copyright details (including song title, composer’s name, date of composition and publishing house) to the office coordinator so that data projection slides can be prepared and copyright information documented.

· **Recruitment of new musicians and singers**

Throughout history, religious services have been the breeding ground for musical talent. We would like to see that continue. Somehow there needs to be a respectful, cooperative and delicate balance struck between the encouragement of new talent while at the same time maintaining a level of competence that is conducive to worship. Feedback regarding competence or performance should always be honest and encouraging and is best done following consultation with others. It is worth noting that while we need to continually

Reviewed August 2015 2 of 5

work at improving our playing or singing, the occasional “blue” or “clanger” tends to be noticed by other musicians and singers more than the average person seated in the pews. The precise way new musicians and singers are assimilated into the music team will vary

from season to season according to the circumstances at any given time. Strategies put in place must be realistic and achievable for all parties.

· **Musical diversity**

- A diverse range of musical styles is to be encouraged. Traditional, contemporary, jazz, blues, classical, hip-hop etc.
- A diverse range of musical instruments is to be encouraged. Guitars, keyboard, wind, organ, percussion, strings etc.

· **New songs**

We are always open to new songs. But it is advisable to have no more than one new song in any one service.

· **Guest artists**

The booking of guest artists – professional or volunteer – can be worked out on an occasional basis in conjunction with and approval of the ministers. We welcome the regular involvement of guest musicians, singers and groups.

· **Choice of song**

Weekly practice and protocol will change over time but it is important that the choice of songs be the result of a combined effort of minister(s), singers and musicians.

- Reasons for choosing. Songs are chosen for a variety of reasons. A traditional hymn that we may experience as inappropriate or “no longer relevant” may indeed be included in a service for pastoral reasons. These are legitimate grounds for selecting a song above and beyond lyric or melody.
- Right of veto. Whether they choose to attend musical planning meetings or not, the minister(s) have right of veto over any particular song selected for over-riding pastoral or theological reasons.

· **Communicating a song list**

Ideally, songs for the following month of services will be chosen in advance and clearly displayed so that office volunteers, other musicians and singers can begin preparing in

Reviewed August 2015 3 of 5

advance (or at least in the days leading up to Sunday) without needing to chase up the song selection work group. It is the responsibility of musicians and singers to contact each other or the church office prior to a rehearsal to find out what songs are selected for any given

Sunday.

- **Changing a song list**

Much creative energy and extensive office processes go into preparing a song for Sunday. Therefore, changing a song should only be done for substantial reasons and careful thought given to the work involved for others in making such a change eg. words for data projector operator, less accomplished musicians, copyright recorder. Attention needs to be given to musicians and singers who are unable to contribute meaningfully to the changes eg. create an alternative musical arrangement that does not require that instrument.

- **Changing song lyric**

Subjective and arbitrary changes to song words can produce strong negative feelings within a worshipping congregation. We need to avoid single-handed, ill-considered and ongoing changes. On the other hand, some songs use unhelpful images of God or inappropriate descriptions of the human race which require changing if a song is to be sung with integrity. If the changes required are major and affect the overall nature of the song, it may be best to remove that song from the church's repertoire. However, if a minor change to pronoun(s) or title for God avoids the problem, such a change can be approved by ministers and music/singing coordinators.

In general, this church supports a policy of inclusive language wherever realistically possible. Our strong preference will always be to avoid using exclusive terms to describe God (him, etc.) or humanity (him, brotherhood, etc.) We recognise, however, that in some circumstances this can detract from the flow or "feel" of some well known songs. It needs to be recognised that what is sometimes described as the "traditional" or "standard" words of a song are not traditional or standard at all but simply "what we happened to grow up with". Discretion of the ministers will normally apply. Where songs are included in the *Together in Song* hymn book, their lead should serve as an authoritative standard in these matters.

Most copyright agencies (eg. CCLI) permit the changing of gender specific pronouns (he, him, his) to "all", "their", etc. or the female equivalent (she, her, hers).

No-one has the right to change song words unilaterally. Consultation with other stakeholders is the key to understanding and cooperation.

Reviewed August 2015 4 of 5

Policy References

None

Review of Policy

This policy shall be reviewed annually

Further Information

If you require further information, contact the Music Team Leader via the Church office

Authorised by: (Chair of Elders)

Signature: Date: