

**Title: 'Singing a New Song' - Assessing the Impact of Musical Genre on the Use of the Lectionary and the *Book of Common Prayer*: A Case for the Use of 'Blended Worship' in Church of Ireland Parishes**

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**Abstract**

**Key words / terms:** *Book of Common Prayer*, Anglican, Church of Ireland, Lectionary, Scripture, blended, worship, music, genre, contemporary, choral tradition, worship wars, context, diversity, mission, Psalms, Psalter.

As we continue to discover how best to 'sing to the Lord a new song' (Psalm 96:1), worship within the Church of Ireland must be adequately focussed on the *Book of Common Prayer*. This rich resource is our Anglican heritage and is central to the Anglican balance of Scripture, Reason and Tradition. It not only serves as an important element of our public worship but it also acts, through the simple structure of Daily Prayer, as a valuable resource for personal or family devotions.

This study examines two main musical genres found in the Church of Ireland today, namely contemporary worship music and the choral tradition, and assesses the impact of genre on the use of the Lectionary and the prayer book. While the choral tradition seems likely to support Lectionary adherence, given the repertoire and resources available for matching music to Lectionary, the contemporary genre often has a more universal appeal and therefore has greater missional potential. Giving cognisance to the important role of both genres, this dissertation claims that blended worship, where both genres are combined, has the potential to create a worship experience which is liturgically focussed, yet culturally relevant. It is an approach to worship which seeks to embrace the diversity of the entire church family.

Using a qualitative approach, data was collected through a series of interviews with Church of Ireland rectors. Parishes / Rectors A and B are exemplars of the contemporary and choral tradition genres respectively. These are case studies chosen for musical excellence and the high priority and investment these parishes have given to music. I also benefited from the insights of my internship rector and the Reverend Dr Peter Thompson who is both a Church of Ireland rector and church music expert. He was also instrumental in the publication in 2015 of the Church of Ireland hymn book supplement *Thanks & Praise*, a resource which supports the use of blended worship.