

## **Abstract**

**Title:** What can we learn from past and present thinking and practice of music in worship to guide future ministry?

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Music plays a central role in worship. Throughout history, this has been the case in many religions. The early Christians believed that they had every reason to praise God in song and give thanks for his offer of salvation through Jesus. Sung worship remains a major feature of Christianity.

Why? What is it about singing in worship that has enabled it not only to endure but to flourish in the Christian Church through the centuries?

How has it come to achieve its central role in Anglican liturgy within the Church of Ireland? And, most importantly, given its prominence, what factors contribute to its effective use in ministry?

There must be something theological and biblical about music in worship to make it acceptable. This dissertation assesses what theologians have said about sung worship at key points in its development. It also analyses biblical antecedents to see if today's sung worship in the Church of Ireland has a scriptural basis.

As well as past thinking, the dissertation analyses not only how Anglicans of earlier generations worshipped but also how some Church of Ireland parishes in the Greater Belfast area currently worship through music. The intention is to ascertain what both history and current thought and practice can teach tomorrow's Church leaders so that the use of music in worship in future will be more effective.

Finally, that music can fulfil numerous functions and meet various needs is acknowledged. Some of these are investigated so that a greater understanding of the potential of music in worship can be achieved.

Throughout the dissertation, a guiding motivation is to study those things which can have an impact on music in worship so that conclusions are drawn to enable this important ingredient of the liturgy to be as effective as possible.