

MUSIC DEPARTMENT REPORT
1995 Charge Conference
Duke Memorial United Methodist Church
Durham, North Carolina

When music is viewed from a non-technical vantage point, it will reveal itself to be an integral part of life, a form of expression similar to speech. Our instrumental music, choral anthems, and responses aid worship, and music becomes a means of worship when the congregation sings hymns, doxologies, and responses.

Without the wonderful people in our music department who tirelessly give of themselves, this church would not be able to experience the varied offerings in our worship services each week. These people desire to give their best, yet maintain a critical balance between musical excellence, liturgical and theological meaning, and ministry. I am very proud to be associated with them, and it is indeed an honor to serve in their midst.

Music is an expressive form which flourishes best in a group of people whose spirits crave a means of expression. Together we undertake to sing a new song to the Lord... that in all things we do God may be glorified.

The primary direction in which our music department moves is that of worship leadership. We must never be satisfied being an organization with a busy program, but must strive to become a living organism where worship challenges each person to recognize and act upon their individual call from God. It must be centered on the whole person doing the will of God in every aspect of their life. It is to this end that we work together in our ministry of music. It is a two-fold ministry... our groups ministering to the larger congregation, and also ministering one to another within the smaller groups.

We have a graded choir program which includes the Carol Choir (K-1st), the Wesley Singers (2nd-5th), and the Youth Ensemble (6th-12th). Our bell ministry consists of Ring for Joy (youth) who are just beginning to explore the possibilities of handbell ringing, and the Bethany Bells (adult) who not only provide worship leadership in our own congregation, but travel into the community to offer additional musical programs. Our adult choral program has two facets: Celebration Singers meet monthly and sing music in worship which is less formal and frequently includes our Liturgical Dancers who combine music and the visual art of movement. The Sanctuary Choir gives weekly leadership to worship and also provides special musical programs which this year will include the regional premier of a Christmas work for choir, soloists, harp, timpani, and organ; a Vesper service of unpublished Psalm settings by English composer Benjamin Burrows, written for his choir at Victoria Road Church, Leicester, England; and in the spring will present "An American Jazz Mass," written by Frank Tirro, within the intended context of the Eucharist. This work is scored for choir, trumpet, alto saxophone, baritone saxophone, string bass, and drums.

We would ask for this congregation's support with their prayers as we continue to seek a deepened awareness of God's presence and the Spirit's guidance for our music program. We would also encourage them to life their own voices in a new song to the Lord, never to be satisfied with an inactive role, but to make worship and liturgy what it is meant to be... the work of the people.

In Christ's service,

Robert J. Irvine

