# A Guide to Help Clergy Work with Musicians

Apologies and acknowledgement to RSCM Church Music Help Sheets: Working with the Clergy (CD7 & O3)

## Suggestions:

### 1. Pray for your musicians

and pray for the things that matter to them: family, current projects and their ministry generally.

## 2. Compliment them

when they do something well, but only when you can be sincere in your praise. Musicians are inherently insecure; each performance is an exposure of their personhood. A comment on a musician's playing or singing is as personal to them as a comment on your appearance or what clothes you are wearing is personal to you. Therefore constant encouragement and positive feedback is vital to their soul.

#### 3. Take an interest

in their aims and goals.

If they are not setting goals or trying something new, encourage them when they do experiment, even when it fails.

Don't assume music is the only ministry they might be interested in. Never take their music ministry for granted.

#### 4. Help create an accepting congregation

who will encourage them, accept mistakes and respond positively to "experiments." Create an atmosphere where "mistakes" or "failures" are not the end of the world but a necessary part of learning how to do it better. This will also encourage other liturgical creativity.

Encourage the congregation not to take musicians for granted. Often a musician's contribution is only remembered and commented on when a mistake is made.

### 5. Consult them

early and consult them often. Never surprise musicians with a "last minute" song or hymn. Just as you don't expect yourself to preach without notice, nor should you expect musicians to play without notice.

There is always more rehearsal than performance in the life of a musician. Find ways to express your appreciation and acknowledgement of this. Help make them to be part of the liturgical team by involving them in liturgy planning.

#### 6. Earn their respect

by preparing thoroughly for worship and knowing your role in the worship service. Arrive early and start the worship on time. Consult the musicians well before the service begins to see if any has changes have been made since you last met. Poor leadership of worship makes their job so much harder.

#### 7. Don't wait too long

in a "new" situation to meet and consult with the musicians. A good working relationship between musicians and clergy is vital for effective music ministry. Remember, they may be having difficulty in coming to terms with you; have patience with them.

#### 8. "I'm not a musician"

is not a barrier to clergy enabling effective music ministry to flourish. As with any other ministry challenge in the Church, a music "problem" requires pastoral leadership, not music expertise. Clergy have more or less musicianship and experience which may help or hinder. However, musicians are human beings and require the same pastoral care and pastoral leadership as anyone else. Good pastoral leadership skills are the key. Flood any "problem" with as many solutions as possible by consulting widely. Solutions may come from you, from your musicians, from the congregation or from workshops and consultants.

#### 9. A democratic approach

may help diffuse tensions where preferences for particular styles of music are argued over and made a battleground. Consider who chooses the hymns; use a committee if necessary to widen the input into which music is to be used. Not only will people feel they have an input into the style and type of hymns but it may provide new liturgical ideas.

Continue to encourage excellence in worship whatever the style of music, and whatever the competence of your musicians.

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