

Music Ministry

Music and Change: A Conversation with Dent Davidson

Sandra Montes

Dent Davidson has been exploring the music that we build into our worship since serving as a boy chorister in British Columbia, where he sang traditional Episcopal repertoire. At 16, he joined a gospel choir and fell in love with African American music, and from there he has kept growing and exploring ever-expanding ways to bring music that moves us and deepens our worship. Below, Sandra Montes shares highlights from her [interview with Dent](#).

As Dent introduces himself, he talks about his deep love for African American music. It was foreign to him, because everything he had learned before that was from a page to either his voice or piano. He says that “their tradition was call and response, and they can throw every ounce of their being into it.”

Music and healing

Dent says, “I call myself an artist, and I think healing best comes through the arts because they are a deep part of the human experience. The music that happens around us is taken into our bodies and psyche, and the act of singing is healing because we are taking in beautiful, healthy air and letting out the bad. It’s beautiful in itself, but when you do it in community, it’s an experience that defies words.” Early in our conversation, Dent sings *Come Bring Your Burdens to God*, and says that this song is eight measures of a simple call to come into God’s deeper, richer, more profound presence. Dent tells us about Threshold choirs – groups of people, often women, who go to hospices and homes where people are dying and sing people across the threshold from this life to the next. And people who are patients in memory care, the minute you begin doing “Amazing Grace” or “The Lord is my Shepherd,” oftentimes it will kick right in, because it went into our brains in a different way. We sang it – a different pathway that didn’t get wrecked because of the dementia.

Start with what you know and try things

Dent says that he has a soundtrack going all the time that includes pieces from world music to Stanford’s *Magnificat* to something in French and to gospel music. He’s often singing what he learned when he was eleven and a treble, things like *Hear My Prayer* by Mendelssohn and old, iconic Anglican pieces. If someone were to ask him what they could do if they wanted to go beyond the Hymnal 1982, he would say to go back to it and use it with fresh eyes. You can make the hymns your own. You can sing *Hyfrydol* like a dance instead of the stately way we’ve usually done it. One of the great principles in Dent’s life is giving people permission to try things. He says, “Take what you already have and use it. And then we have several approved resources in the church that you can use, and you can go beyond that.”

Planning that nurtures growth

“Planning is the heart of church music,” says Dent. He encourages us to wrestle with the scriptures first and ask ourselves what have we not heard before when we read these scriptures. One way to plan is by using the “Six Weeks Out” method – you look at the previous Sunday, the coming Sunday and the Sunday six weeks out. Once we tackle the scriptures, we can ask ourselves what’s going on in my congregation/city/country/world/creation? The conscious planning with the Word and as a team – music leader/preacher – is very important. It can be difficult, it takes time, but it is richly rewarding. In planning, he says, “Don’t use a fence, don’t set a limit, you can always reel it back in. Take a chance.” We must remember that our job at the root is to unbind; we need to unbind the scriptures – the Good News – and act like we have good news to share.

He suggests the following resources for planning:

- *Liturgical Music for the Revised Common Lectionary*, by editors Carl P. Daw Jr. and Thomas Pavlechko
- *Psalms for All Seasons: A Complete Psalter for Worship*, edited by Martin Tel, Joyce Berger and John D. Witvliet
- [Singing From the Lectionary](#)
- Various hymnwriters like [Ruth Duck](#)
- Sharing resources with our siblings throughout the Church

Welcoming and encouraging change

Instead of being expansive, many people approach our practice from: We learned it this way, we’re going to keep it this way, maybe we’ll try something new. Dent says that he thinks our church would attract more people if we showed them how much we have changed because of God, and because the way we sing together and worship together, not only makes us feel good but pushes us out those doors and into the world to serve.

Dent says that the fastest growing churches are the Latinx churches. People say that they don’t sing Spanish because there are no Spanish speakers in their churches. He says that it is not because we don’t have Spanish speakers in the room that we don’t sing Spanish songs. We don’t sing in Spanish because we’re afraid that we will change if Spanish speakers come through the door and make our worship different. “Our worship better be different every week!” he says.

Teaching new music to choirs and congregations

When you are teaching music to a choir, particularly a difficult piece, Dent says that you can build on what you already know, week to week. First, you can sing the song to them. Then, you can repeat the words slowly. Then, you can speak the song in rhythm. You can use call and repeat and continue this until people learn it.”

When teaching a congregation a new song, you can play the melody on the piano, or any other instrument, during the offertory one week. Then the next week, you can teach them pieces of the song and use call and response for that. You can also use your bulletin to let people know that the choir will be singing a song one week and the congregation will sing it the following week, to prepare them. Building trust is most important when you want your congregation to sing.

When people are hesitant to try new things and to grow, or if they think they want to leave a church instead of trying new things, it's a pastoral opportunity and they can be reminded that we work through, we pray through, we sing through, we live through our lives together and we do new things and old things. Dent says that we are called to teach the Church how to die and rise and that is our common ground.

Dent loves getting to know people and collaborating. You can reach him at DentDavidson@gmail.com.

*Over forty-five years of professional lay ministry, **Dent Davidson** has been called to continual examination and re-imagining of church music and liturgy, embracing the best of received tradition and expanding it. He has served in leadership roles in several parishes, two cathedrals and on a diocesan staff. Each position focused on vitality in worship. Having earned a degree in Composition and Vocal Jazz, he travels widely as a workshop clinician and consultant in music and worship and serves as Chaplain and Musician to the House of Bishops. He currently serves Trinity Parish in Santa Barbara as Animator: one who imagines, teaches and leads new ways of expressing ourselves in liturgy and music.*

*Interviewer **Sandra Montes** is the Spanish Language Resource Consultant at ECF. She was born in Perú, grew up in Guatemala and settled in Texas as soon as she could. Her passions are God, family (especially her son), music, education and writing. Sandra has been developing original bilingual resources for her church, school, and others for years. She has volunteered and worked in the Episcopal Church since she was welcomed in 1986. She serves as musician, translator, speaker, consultant and writer. She earned her doctorate in education in 2016 and is a full-time freelance consultant and musician.*

Resources:

- [Why do Churches Need a Choir?](#) by Greg Syler, an ECF Vital Practices blog, March 13, 2017
- [Music Ministry: A Tribute](#) by Annette Buchanan, an ECF Vital Practices blog, October 2, 2017
- [Discerning Need: The Power of Openness, Listening, & Music](#), by Erin Weber-Johnson, an ECF Vital Practices blog, August 6, 2015
- [Piano-Strings Evangelism](#) by Richelle Thompson, an ECF Vital Practices blog, May 25, 2016

Decolonizing Church Music

Yuri Rodriguez

“Look around, look around, at how lucky we are to be alive right now....” Remember a year ago, the weekend of July 4th? The cancelled fireworks, the skyrocketing infections, the hospitals running out of beds, our disbelief that this pandemic was getting worse, the pain of losing our loved ones, the statistics, the political campaign, the virtual worship, the cancelled choir rehearsals, the debate between communion or ante communion ... George Floyd. And in the midst of such disorienting times, it was the powerful music of Lin Manuel Miranda, and his re-imagined history of the founding fathers fighting for freedom for all (truly for all) that brought us a cooling breeze and a sense of union, relief from the zoom fatigue and the uncertainty. This is just one of the many examples of how music and the musicians who executed, performed, recorded and shared their gifts with the world were among the great heroes of the pandemic.

Music kept us sane, gave us a purpose, moved us to bring our hearts together in emotions of solidarity, support and compassion. Music helped us feel better about ourselves, about our world. Musicians all over the world, from every genre and from every style, shared their gifts and skills with the hope of providing some sanity and love to a world folded in two by COVID-19.

And church musicians were no exception. When the news came that singing would spread the virus, making it more dangerous, church musicians in one way or another, perhaps some fancier than others, all of us, jumped into action and provided an answer to the question: What now?

Who decides?

Back in 2017, in his essay “Theologizing Latinamente,” Dr. Orlando Espín reminded us of something that has been greatly highlighted through this pandemic year, that the days of imperial and colonial naiveté are now behind us. Espín recalled Prosper of Aquitaine and his saying “*lex orandi, lex credendi*,” to remind us that the law of what we pray is the law of what we believe, and if what we pray is important, then what we pray for, who prays and where we pray are equally important.

The question is then, who chooses our *lex orandi*? Who chooses our prayers? Who chooses who prays and where we pray? Furthermore, this statement is equally fitting when it comes to church music. I propose that not just *lex orandi*, but *lex canendi, lex credendi*, in other words, the law of what we sing establishes the law of what we believe. Thus, if the law of what we sing matters, then who chooses our songs, what we sing about, who sings and where we sing matters just as much, perhaps even more. Our music, the songs we sing, are impacted by many circumstances, pressures, interests and conflicts that have their origin in agendas not strictly theological or even Christian. I would like to paraphrase Espín by stating that church music, just like theology can be and has been, manipulated or crafted into the service of ideologies and interests that might not be transparent or honorable. To pretend otherwise would be irresponsible and naïve. In the words of Espín: being treated as a second-class Christian or theologian (or musician) because one does not live (or sing) or read in the culture of the dominant is doctrinally and morally unacceptable and an example of an imperial attitude that borders on idolatry.^[1]

Since 2017, I have been sharing the story of how our two main Latinx hymnals, *El Himnario* (1998) and *Flor y Canto* (1984), are made up of songs that are not actually Latin American, although they have become part of the Latin American repertoire, thanks to common practices and the process of inculturation. Just as an example: In the Advent section of *Flor y Canto* (2nd ed.) there are 28 songs, only four of which are originally from Latin American composers. Similarly, in the Advent section of *El Himnario*, there are 23 hymns, and only three are originally from Latin American composers. This is an example of what happens when the *lex canendi* is established by the dominant voice in the church, even with the best of intentions.

A chance to experiment

Yet it was this pandemic that gave the Church the opportunity to experiment with non-traditional music. Here I cite two important efforts of the church to decolonize our *lex canendi*. With the support of the Becoming Beloved Community Grants, the Diocese of Indianapolis launched [Worship with Bravery](#), a series of four videos that featured non-traditional music played by musicians of color from Christ Church Cathedral in Indianapolis. Initially this was a project to feature brave worship, worship done with songs that are non-traditional. Our goal was to invite more musicians, priests and congregations to experience this music and perhaps implement it in their own worship.

However, when the pandemic hit we needed to add two other levels of bravery. Not only we were making music that was non-traditional, but we were making music during pandemic times and we were [musicians of color](#), making music at a time when we were constantly hearing the message that we, as immigrants and people of color, were not welcome in the United States. Furthermore, the Diocese of Indianapolis continued offering workshops to inspire us that included a series of virtual seminars with Dr. Alisha Lola Jones and Prof. Vince Carr from Indiana University.

Also, on November 1, 2020, our Episcopal Church livestreamed "[Holding on to Hope: A National Service for Healing and Wholeness](#)" from the National Cathedral and featuring our Presiding Bishop Michael Curry ([leaflet here](#)). With the objective to shine as a beacon of hope for the nation amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, racial reckoning and a hard-fought election, the Episcopal Church and the National Cathedral put together a service that featured mainly contemporary music, songs from different traditions, and none from the 1982 Hymnal, sung by singers and musicians of color from all over the Church.

What we learned

So, what did we learn as we experienced this music through a whole year of online worship? I believe there are four major lessons gleaned from these efforts. First, we learned that our church is ready and eager to start singing music from diverse traditions. Second, we learned that there were styles of music that are more adaptable to worship online and much more effective – contemporary songs, short songs, [chants](#) (traditional and [contemporary](#)), [songs accompanied by guitar](#), songs in unison. Third, we learned that the priority of our music when doing worship online was not aesthetic but missional. In other words, the online worship experience was meaningful as long as congregants could engage with the music, whether they were music literate or not. Finally, we learned that our church is longing to sing a liberation song; a song that can bring us together as equals, a song that can affirm what we believe – that we are called to be a loving, liberating, life-giving beloved community.

***Yuri Rodriguez** just finished her first year of Seminary at Sewanee, University of the South. She is a musician, singer, choral director and church leader who specializes in Latin American Music and Culture.*

Resources:

- [Music for Team Building](#) by Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, January 2019
- [Music Ministry: A Tribute](#) by Annette Buchanan, an ECF Vital Practices blog, October 2, 2017
- [Music and Liturgy](#), The Episcopal Church, January 15, 2020
- [Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music](#) of the Episcopal Church

[1] ESPÍN, ORLANDO O. "Theologizing Latinamente: Had Anselm Known Us!" *Anglican Theological Review* 101, no. 4 (Fall 2019): 587–602.

O Come, Let Us Hum to the Lord

Jemonde Taylor

Editor's note: This is a video resource. You may watch the video on our [YouTube channel](#).

Many cultures worldwide have humming or droning as part of the religious tradition. A Harvard study reported that humming is good for health, and Psychology Today reported that humming may ease stress, boost happiness and soothe sinuses. There is something transporting and meditative about humming or droning, holding a sustained note for some time. It is deeper than a placeholder response when one does not know the lyrics to a song.

There are several examples of droning in the Christian tradition. The musical traditions in Ethiopia, England and the African American experience in the United States highlight the importance of droning or humming to connect the faithful to God. In the Ethiopian Orthodox tradition, the drone is the convergence of transcendence and immanence, of both corporate and private prayer overlapping. The drone connects the gathered community to the officiant who is chanting. Droning also connects the individual congregant who offers personal prayers to God. Both happen simultaneously.

It is not uncommon to find droning in the Episcopal Church. Some church choirs and congregations drone or hum during the Great Litany, the Litany at Ordination or the biddings in the Prayers of People, particularly Form IV. Anglican chant is not droning. However, the structure and repetition of chanting can have a similar meditative effect. There is droning in some African American spirituals composed by enslaved Africans. Traditionally, spirituals operated on two levels. One was a musical prayer to God. The second level communicated coded language, signaling when to escape chattel slavery. Droning, humming and chanting are rich parts of Christian spirituality. Droning can give a new perspective and lead to a remixing of Psalm 95: "O come, let us *hum* to the Lord!" Humming is healing.

*The Reverend Jemonde Taylor is the eleventh rector of Saint Ambrose Episcopal Church, Raleigh, North Carolina. Jemonde serves the Diocese of North Carolina as president of the Standing Committee, member of Diocesan Council, the Discipline Board, and co-chair for the Bishop's Nominating Committee. A board member of the Seminary of the Southwest and the Gathering of Leaders, Jemonde is also a member of a five-person group recently awarded a \$400,000 Henry Luce Foundation grant to produce a film and multimedia project on gentrification, race and theological education and practice. Learn more about his ministry by viewing his presentation, *Wrapped in Whiteousness*, on the Episcopal Church Foundation's [YouTube channel](#).*

Resources:

- [Discerning Need: The Power of Openness, Listening, & Music](#), by Erin Weber-Johnson, an ECF Vital Practices blog, August 6, 2015
- [Music for Team Building](#) by Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, January 2019
- [Piano-Strings Evangelism](#) by Richelle Thompson, an ECF Vital Practices blog, May 25, 2016
- [Why do Churches Need a Choir?](#) by Greg Syler, an ECF Vital Practices blog, March 13, 2017

Music That Builds Bridges

Jeannine Otis

We all know the old expression, when you sing you pray twice. Well in my vision of music ministry, I add an additional thought – to do my best to live into the idea that *what* we sing has to do with the efficacy of our prayers. The sincerity of our prayers for building community and welcoming growth manifest themselves in the way we go about selecting music for our services.

Our challenge is to have music that authentically welcomes everyone.

The soul of the ministry is in the Word, and inclusive music is its ‘heartbeat.’

I feel that some part of the essence of the future of our Church lies in our ability to be authentically inclusive and to keep ourselves tuned in to that heartbeat.

Music is the universal language that reaches across generations and continents. So when we make the effort to be inclusive musically, we are praying the prayer that builds community and builds bridges.

Time, patience and an open heart

This thought is *not* a mandate for everyone to go out and prove themselves current by including music that doesn’t fit the scriptural theme for the day or the overall pulse of that particular worship community, but it *is* a mandate to explore those songs that go to the heart of what is moving and to include the ‘other’ (a term I dislike, but useful for projecting what some people feel in an unfamiliar worship setting.) This could include songs from many different sources. Then it is important to wrap the music inside the amazing liturgy of the church, placing it strategically, so that we can hear it in all its beauty.

Music placed in the course of worship with such care enhances our joy, our reflection, our prayer, our sense of hope. And it builds community in a way that is visceral, creating bonds and authentic connections.

There is no formula for this kind of work, except that we are driven by an open heart and love of the process. It takes time and lots of patience. Real progress in this way, however, begins with putting value on diverse cultural traditions and honoring the way the music is presented.

Presentation matters

I want to make certain to say that traditional music *is* an integral part of this ‘heartbeat.’ There are so many hymns and choral works that move us because they are beautiful. We’ve heard them as children and adults, and their spirit moves us in our solar plexus. Music can remind us of our loved ones, milestones and difficult times. These songs can lift us all up. But I do believe that *how* we present traditional hymns in worship is important. It is crucial to keep the energy and love of the music in the presentation, to relate musically to the story told in hymns and to sing the old hymns with love and with energy. It is also important, to do the educational homework and help all understand the history behind the traditional music we sing.

For example, the story I love to tell groups has to do with my trip to Leipzig and St. Thomas Church, where Bach was the “Thomaskantor” (Cantor at Saint Thomas). In that space, I got a sense of a kind of simplicity — of a man who was writing to glorify and uplift through his music while having children and living life. I think the soul of his music can be reached through the simple beauty of his music. He was by nature inclusive, and the heart of his music *is* inclusive.

In our more community-based settings, singing Bach can require lots of hands-on work, including selecting pieces that are accessible and a good match for the skill level of the choral group.

Learning this 'heartbeat' from others

Early on, I was influenced by several amazing musicians who loved music because it moved people. There was only good music and music that was not well done. Then, as I worked at Saint Mark's, I encountered Horace Boyer, Editor of *Lift Every Voice and Sing*, Carl Maultsby, and the Rev Dr. Claire McPherson, who have always had a lot to say about this subject and who lived into being musically inclusive. They all shared the belief that the concept of inclusivity is indeed the 'heartbeat' of the Church.

My mother, Adrienne Otis, was an accountant and a 'full-time' volunteer musician, organizing events that included C.L. Franklin and his church, as well as community choirs that sang Beethoven's Ninth, Bach chorales, and spiritual classics from H.T. Burleigh and Hall Johnson. That was an amazing journey for those from the African American Episcopal and African American Episcopal Zion Church traditions. Owen Jander at Wellesley College, Ms. Ivy, who played gospel music like she was the accompanist to Mahalia, and William Mann, a brilliant organist I knew in Detroit, all brought their love of inclusive music to my life.

Owen Jander loved Marion Anderson and Leontyne Price. This was not the usual at Wellesley College, but it became so under his leadership. Ms. Ivy was a master at serving as accompanist in any style. Then there was Mr. Mann. He could play anything on the organ. We will never hear of him, because his day job was as a postman. He could play the organ and make people cry, and then play an up-tempo song that would make those listening want to shout – although there was not much shouting in my church growing up. When I worked with him as a child, he would point to his ear, and say, "Listen. Watch the music, but listen."

This diverse group of amazing musicians loved being eclectic, just by the nature of who they were. And they all believed that the soul of what we do as music ministers lives in our desire to be inclusive and to inspire the best in all.

I bring up these people to point out my belief in the crucial importance that inspiring communities to reach out to one another and 'others' through music has for the life of the Church. There is no set formula. The actual 'doing' process is the glue. We need the term 'other' in discussion to dissolve. Although we always pray that the product is wonderful, it is the process that binds us. And so that process can become similar to walking a labyrinth, each step bringing us closer to understanding one another in our prayer as we make music in worship together.

This original prayer by Larry Marshall inspires my work:

It is comforting to know that when it was proclaimed that I was made in your image
That it's the Soul and not the body that was meant
It's comforting to know that when I talk to myself, I'm talking to YOU
When I talk to someone else that I'm talking to YOU
It's comforting to know that because of this I am never without YOU
THEREFORE
I am never alone as I wander through this wonderment called LIFE
Wrapped in the comfort of YOUR love

Jeannine Otis is a performer, writer, recording artist, teaching artist and Music Director who made her professional performance debut at the age of 13 with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra under the

direction of Carmen Dragon and with American Youth Performs as a soloist. Ms. Otis works with projects all over the world using art as a tool for social change and building community. Her book, The Gathering, has been turned into a music theater piece entitled "Who Am I" and featuring Anthony Turner. It has been presented in many settings, including the National Portrait Gallery in the Smithsonian in 2019. She is an honors graduate of both Wellesley College and Emerson College and is the Director of Music at Saint Marks Church in the Bowery.

Some examples of bridge- and community-building music

- ["Todo" by Sandra Montes](#), "[I Am Sending You Light](#)," [Ana Hernandez](#)
Traditional, "O God Our Help in Ages Past" (reminds me of my mother and her love of hymns)
- LEVAS, "There's a Sweet, Sweet Spirit in This Place" (sat with the late Horace Boyer, editor of LEVAS, as he played the hymn and explained what it meant to him; such an amazing moment – we also danced the 'bus stop' together at Kanuga)
- *Wonder, Love, and Praise*, "Peace Before Us" (people have movements that go with this song.)
- [Taize. "Nada Te Turbe,"](#) (We had a gathering with the leaders of the Taize Community in the early 90s, and I remember the feeling I got when I saw the icon and the many people who came to sing)
- *Song of Praise*, "Come Let Us Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness" (reminds me of Bill Randolph and our choir together)

Resources:

- [The Message of Welcome](#), by Linda Buskirk, an ECF Vital Practices blog, February 10, 2020
- [Risking Authenticity](#), by Lauren Kay, an ECF Vital Practices blog, June 4, 2019
- [Pronoun Buttons: A Sign of Welcome](#), by Lisa G. Fischbeck, an ECF Vital Practices blog, April 5, 2019
- [Ten Signs of a Welcoming Congregation](#), by Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, November 2018

Descolonización de la música eclesiástica

Yuri Rodriguez

"Mire a su alrededor, mire a su alrededor, la suerte que tenemos de estar vivos hoy...". ¿Se acuerda del fin de semana del 4 de julio de hace un año? Las infecciones se habían disparado, los hospitales se habían quedado sin camas, nuestra incredulidad de que esta pandemia estaba empeorando, el dolor de perder seres queridos, las estadísticas, la campaña política, el culto virtual, los ensayos del coro cancelados, el debate entre comunión o ante comunión... George Floyd. En medio de tiempos tan desorientadores, estuvo la poderosa música de Lin Manuel Miranda y su historia reimaginada de los padres fundadores luchando por la libertad para todos (realmente para todos), lo que nos trajo una brisa refrescante, un sentido de unión y alivio de la fatiga del zoom y de la incertidumbre. Éste es solo uno de los muchos ejemplos de cómo la música y los músicos que ejecutaron, interpretaron, grabaron y compartieron sus dones con el mundo se contaban entre los grandes héroes de la pandemia.

La música nos mantuvo cuerdos, nos dio un propósito, nos animó a unir nuestros corazones en emociones de solidaridad, apoyo y compasión. La música nos ayudó a sentirnos mejor sobre nosotros mismos, sobre nuestro mundo. Músicos de todo el mundo, de todos los géneros y todos los estilos,

compartieron sus dones y destrezas con la esperanza de proporcionar un poco de cordura y amor a un mundo doblado en dos por la COVID-19.

Los músicos eclesiásticos no fueron ninguna excepción. Cuando llegó la noticia de que cantar diseminaría el virus, causando que fuera más peligroso, los músicos eclesiásticos -- de una manera u otra y tal vez unos más pulidos que otros --, todos nosotros entramos en acción sin vacilar y contestamos la pregunta ¿y ahora qué?

¿Quiénes deciden?

En 2017, en su ensayo "Theologizing Latinamente", el Dr. Orlando Espín nos recordó algo que se había mencionado mucho durante el año de la pandemia: que los días de ingenuidad imperial y colonial habían quedado atrás. Espín recordó a Próspero de Aquitania y su axioma "*lex orandi, lex credendi*", para recordarnos que la ley de lo que oramos es la ley de lo que creemos y que si lo que oramos es importante, entonces por lo que oramos, quiénes oramos y dónde oramos son elementos igualmente importantes.

Entonces, la pregunta es ¿quiénes escogen la *lex orandi*? ¿Quiénes escogen nuestras oraciones? ¿Quiénes escogen quiénes oran y dónde oramos? Además, este enunciado es igualmente apto cuando se trata de música eclesiástica. Propongo que no sea solo *lex orandi*, sino *lex canendi, lex credendi*, en otras palabras, la ley de lo que cantamos establece lo que creemos. Por lo tanto, si la ley de lo que cantamos cuenta, entonces quienes escogen nuestras canciones y los temas de ellas, quiénes cantamos y dónde cantamos cuenta en igual medida y tal vez hasta más.

Nuestra música, las canciones que cantamos, están influidas por muchas circunstancias, presiones, intereses y conflictos originados en agendas no estrictamente teológicas o incluso cristianas. Me gustaría parafrasear a Espín diciendo que la música eclesiástica, al igual que la teología, han sido manipuladas o escritas con intereses que pueden ser no transparentes u honorables. Pretender que ese no es el caso sería irresponsable e ingenuo. En las palabras de Espín, ser tratado como un cristiano o teólogo (o músico) de segunda categoría porque uno no vive (o canta) o lee en la cultura de la voz dominante es doctrinal y moralmente inaceptable y un ejemplo de una actitud imperial que raya en la idolatría^[1].

Desde 2017, he estado compartiendo la historia de los dos principales himnarios latinx usados en la Iglesia Episcopal. *El Himnario* (1998) y *Flor y Canto* (1984) contienen canciones que no son realmente latinoamericanas, aunque han pasado a ser parte del repertorio latinoamericano, gracias a las prácticas comunes y al proceso de inculturación. Solo como un ejemplo, en la sección de Adviento de *Flor y Canto* (2a ed.) hay 28 canciones, de las cuales solo cuatro son originariamente de compositores latinoamericanos. Asimismo, en la sección de Adviento del *Himnario*, hay 23 himnos y solo tres de ellos son originariamente de compositores latinoamericanos. Este es un ejemplo de lo que pasa cuando *lex canendi* es establecida por la voz dominante en la iglesia, incluso con la mejor de las intenciones.

Una oportunidad para experimentar

Sin embargo, fue esta pandemia lo que dio a la Iglesia la oportunidad de experimentar con música no tradicional. Aquí cito dos esfuerzos importantes de la Iglesia para descolonizar nuestra *lex canendi*. Con el apoyo de los subsidios Becoming Beloved Community (Convertirse en Comunidad Bienamada), la Diócesis de Indianápolis lanzó [Worship with Bravery](#) (Culto con Valentía), una serie de cuatro videos con

música no tradicional tocada por músicos de color de la Catedral Christ Church en Indianápolis. Inicialmente éste fue un proyecto de presentación de culto valiente, culto realizado con canciones no tradicionales. Nuestro objetivo era invitar a más músicos, sacerdotes y feligresías a que experimentaran esta música y tal vez a que la implementaran en sus propios cultos.

Sin embargo, cuando pegó la pandemia tuvimos que añadir otros dos niveles de valentía. No solo estábamos haciendo música no tradicional, sino que estábamos haciendo música durante la pandemia y éramos [músicos de color](#) haciendo música en un momento en que estábamos oyendo constantemente el mensaje de que nosotros, como inmigrantes y gente de color, no éramos bienvenidos en Estados Unidos. Además, la Diócesis de Indianápolis siguió brindando talleres que nos inspiraron, incluyendo una serie de seminarios virtuales con la Dra. Alisha Lola Jones y el profesor Vince Carr, de la Universidad de Indiana.

Asimismo, el 1º de noviembre de 2020, nuestra Iglesia Episcopal transmitió en vivo “Aferrándose a la esperanza: Un servicio religioso nacional para la curación y la plenitud” desde la Catedral Nacional con la presencia de nuestro Obispo Presidente Michael Curry (folleto aquí). Con el objetivo de brillar como un faro de esperanza para la nación en medio de la pandemia de la COVID-19, el ajuste de cuentas racial y una elección muy reñida, la Iglesia Episcopal y la Catedral Nacional organizaron un servicio religioso principalmente con música contemporánea y canciones de diferentes tradiciones --y ninguna del Himnario de 1982--, cantadas por cantantes y músicos de color de toda la Iglesia.

Lo que aprendimos

Entonces, ¿qué aprendimos al experimentar esta música durante todo un año de culto en línea? Creo que se pueden sacar cuatro lecciones principales de estos esfuerzos. Primero, aprendimos que nuestra iglesia está lista y ansiosa por empezar a cantar música de tradiciones diversas. Segundo, aprendimos que algunos estilos de música fueron más adaptables al culto en línea y mucho más efectivos: canciones tradicionales, canciones cortas, [salmodias](#) (tradicionales y contemporáneas), canciones con acompañamiento de guitarra, canciones en unísono. Tercero, aprendimos que la prioridad de nuestra música cuando rendimos culto en línea no es estética sino misionera. En otras palabras, la experiencia de rendir culto en línea fue significativa en cuanto los feligreses podían sentirse parte de la música, independientemente de si podían leer música o no. Finalmente, nos enteramos de que nuestra iglesia anhelaba cantar una canción de liberación, una canción que nos pudiera unir como iguales, una canción que pudiera afirmar lo que creemos: que estamos llamados a ser una comunidad bienamada que ama, libera y da vida.

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Recursos:

- [Música para fortalecer el trabajo en equipo](#) por Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, enero 2019
- [Music and Liturgy](#), The Episcopal Church, 15 enero 2020
- [Diez señales de una congregación acogedora](#) por Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, noviembre 2018
- [Para Crecer Espiritualmente Necesitamos Ser Amados](#) por Andrés Herrera, un blog de ECF Vital Practices, 23 agosto 2019

[1] ESPÍN, ORLANDO O. “Theologizing Latinamente: Had Anselm Known Us!” *Anglican Theological Review* 101, no. 4 (Otoño de 2019): 587–602.