NO MATTER WHAT MAY COME

Because church communities are made up of people, we will go through a wide variety of seasonal experiences in our life together as a church. Birth, death, triumph or loss can radically affect a community – and throw off an unprepared worship leader. Here are some tips on responding, as a worship leader, to the changing worship seasons in our life together.

IN SEASONS OF JOY...

Celebrate. Even if you're more inclined to worship by nature with medium tempo songs or sweet intimate ballads, pull out the stops and fire up some dancing tunage. These kinds of songs give people permission to cut loose and bust a move. If you're congregation is not used to that, have someone do a planned dance in front of them to a clapping song (then encourage finger dancing). Let the kids lead the way, and the adults start to get it.

IN SEASONS OF MOURNING...

Lament. This can be a difficult challenge for a worship leader. Don't be afraid to allow an open-ended song (i.e. one that doesn't give any answers or have a clear, happy resolve) in your worship set. Explain that the song you're about to do is an opportunity for honest questions to rise before God. Give people permission to cry, or to pray out (without feeling a need to theologically correct every prayer that is groaning in someone's heart).

IN SEASONS OF CHALLENGE...

Encourage. There is always hope when Jesus enters the room. As you open your time of worship, engage the congregation in a time of shaking hands, embracing, extending the "peace of Christ" to one another (in Anglican tradition, this is where individuals say to one another "the peace of Christ be with you") or even breaking into small groups and praying for God to quiet our hearts. Looking into each other's eyes can be healing.

IN SEASONS OF HOLIDAY...

Focus. Take the time to make the holiday you're celebrating, and its themes, the main focus of worship for the church. A few weeks of focusing on a theme by choosing particular types of worship songs (ex. Christmas carols through December, Easter songs in the spring) will sweeten the holiday time, and probably not hurt anything in the long run. Try following the Christian year (see Webber article).

IN SEASONS OF CHANGE...

Linger. Create special worship times, outside of your main service if your time is limited there, that create an opportunity for people to linger in the presence of God. Sometimes 20-30 minutes is just not enough time for people to get through their angst and get honest with God. Create longer times to help your community interface with God.