Traditional to Popular

Moving away from organizations and people related to church music in the last three decades, the origin of contemporary worship music was also the result of a broad shift in musical styles. This change in style was not distinct (nor could it be) from its implementation in local churches. Playing different music required different instruments and methodologies. This change was typified by a shift away from 19th and 20th century classical and traditional forms of musical liturgy which involved largely piano and choir-based, multi-part vocal applications in its songs. The transition was made to a style that matched the musical and vocal nuances of popular music as it was developing from the mid 60s until the present day. Originating from campfire songs with the sound of 60s folk music stylings, these simple songs were easily played by musicians and easily learned and sung by the congregants of churches in which they were played.

Critics and proponents of older church music styles (such as hymnal traditionalists) have criticized the more modern musical style of worship music as being lyrically simplistic. Some even believed that updating the musical style of church music was somehow denigrating to the sacredness of the old forms of chants, hymns and traditionally prescribed songs often assigned for use in many Christian denominations.

This conflict between church music traditionalists and modern church music proponents became popularized in the last 20 years as the "worship wars," which encompassed a broader set of issues

but was typified by the stylistic differences of musical genres held by the varying parties.

But church music did change, and the more popular sounds of folk and rock music became a norm of the new worship music style.

The Worship Service's Changing M.O.

Worship music not only brought a shift of musical style into the church, it forced a change in the *tools* and the *people* needed to play the music. Traditional and classical forms of worship music often required classically trained musicians (centered, often, on the piano) and choral singers with multi-part vocal harmonization skills (SATB). The new worship music changed this by utilizing:

- the acoustic guitar,
- simple, melodic song writing,
- garage band musicians and ensemble formats,
- and the chord chart.

These changes in the way church music was learned, played and disseminated had a dramatic effect on the musical liturgy of the Christian church in the modern western world.

The Acoustic Guitar

The introduction of the acoustic guitar as a new primary instrument made the music portable and accessible in almost any venue, where the previous piano-based liturgy was limited to church sanctuaries, meeting places and a few homes. This shift alone helped this new church music to mirror the wildfire spread of popular music that happened throughout the last half of the 20th century, when the influence of the guitar dominated the cultural strata of music in North America and Europe.

Simple, Melodic Songwriting

The predominance of simple, melodic writing in songs was an early earmark of this music. This diverged from the extensive and almost exclusive use of SATB choral applications for vocal parts, which had predated worship music. This new simplicity contributed greatly to the musical style's popularity among congregants who found the music infectious and memorable, also mirroring pop music's influence through the 20th century.

Garage Band Musicians

A corollary factor in the musical style change included the extensive use of non-classically trained musicians (garage band and self-taught musicians) in congregations which espoused worship music. Propelling this was the introduction not only of popular music styles, but the huge influx of tens of thousands of "hippies" (converted through the Jesus people movement of the 60s and 70s) into churches across America. With them, and the growing popular