More Changes Facilitated by Technology

The change in musical style and methodology was relatively easy to measure from one perspective – church resource sales. As churches moved from traditional style hymns to popular choruses of the 80's, then praise and worship songs of the 90s, and modern worship anthems in the last 10 years, those changes were reflected in what churches purchased for their worship ministries.

Hymnals did not disappear completely, but the transition to lyric-based song aids for the congregation ushered in a new era in worship for churches the world over. For over two hundred years the hymnal was the guardian of Protestant church music for both the members of the congregations it served and the ministers who employed it. The hymnal's supplanting dispersed its responsibilities in two ways – church members moved away from its use as a lyrical guide and ministers moved away from its use as a musical source.

Church congregations began to use projection screens (and later video screens) to follow the songs of the modern liturgy. This began with overhead transparencies (in the 70s and 80s), slide projection (in the late 80s and early 90s), TV screen projection (only by larger churches in mid-late the 90s), and eventually (by 2000) software-driven computer displays using software specifically built for lyric presentation. By the end of the millennial decade (2010), the majority of churches in North America had begun using some form of multimedia presentation system.

During this same time, church musicians and leaders began to use modern songbooks, lead sheets, chord charts, even Nashville Number System charts as musician resources. This began in the

form of large collections that largely mimicked the hymnal predecessors' gathering of hundreds of popular songs, only this was filled with praise and worship choruses. *Maranatha Red Book*, *Maranatha Green Book*, *More Songs for Praise and Worship*, *Integrity's Hosanna* volumes and *Vineyard's Songs of the Vineyard* were examples of songbooks that mimicked the hymnal format of large collections of songs.

Those large collections became unwieldy and expensive as the pace of music introduction quickened (with the popularity of worship music growing through the late 80s through mid 90s). Churches began to rely more on continuity clubs during this time, garnering music resources from *Integrity's Hosanna* club, *Vineyard's Touching the Father's Heart* series, and the continued *Maranatha Praise* series. These were supported by a technology shift from cassette to CD audio.

By the end of the 20th century, the internet was in full swing. Access to legal and illegal digital copies of music was exploding. Onstage audio, online purchasing of gear, cheaper digital mixing equipment and other technology changes were propelling the church music ministries into a digital age.

While most musicians were not getting their new song repertoire exclusively from the internet, any audio music resource was quickly accessible online (legally or illegally). Collections of musician resources were soon sold in digital formats (PDFs online, CD-ROMs with vast libraries and software programs with musical tools). In 2001, WorshipTogether.com began releasing online "how-to" videos allowing members to view instructional "New Song Café" episodes which explained how to play new songs. By 2005, YouTube had launched its popular video streaming service. In less than two years the internet provided a huge collection of "how-to" videos (on YouTube and others), allowing instant access

to learn songs quickly by the large and growing contingent of non-classically trained musicians that filled the volunteer and paid ranks of church music ministries.

What happened in three decades (80s, 90s and 2000s) is that both the church musicians and church members quickly incorporated changes in media and music technology to facilitate their needs in the worship context. While the strict use of a hymnal remains in place in some churches, its inflexibility as a tool for local churches ultimately became the cause of its demise, in the face of technological solutions which completely transformed the church ministry tool set and the congregational worship experience.

While there are many benefits to having the flexibility afforded by technology, it is clear (and can be seen clearly on page 54 in *Figure 1 – Forty Years of Church Music Resources*) that the fragmentation of church worship resources into so many components has ironically become as painful in its complexity as the hymnal was in its inflexibility.

While this was relatively clear to see for someone involved in church music resources, it was painfully unclear to many entertainment music labels who tried, often unsuccessfully, to sell products into the "church music" resource world in the last 15 years.

Despite their misunderstanding of the church music resource market, entertainment music labels (and the Christian pop artists on their rosters) would eventually gain influence in bringing new worship songs to the church through the use of radio, as we will see in the next section.