

NT Music Ministry Quick Start



From Erin McGaughan, music director of Seattle Unity

Maybe you're a professional musician who wants to get a job as a music director in a New Thought church.

Maybe you're a gifted volunteer who is being asked to step up and lead the music program.

Maybe you're a minister whose music staff left suddenly and now you're not sure exactly what to do.

Try this quick start document to point you in a good direction.

Basics:

1) Overview of New Thought.

If you haven't done so already, make sure you understand the major differences between New Thought and other denominations.

Typically NT churches don't include music with lyrics that refer to blood, sin, shame, or the redemption story. So for example, in *Amazing Grace*, the lyric is often switched from "wretch like me" to "soul like me". The idea is that we aren't corrupt wretches stained by original sin, who must be cleansed through the death of Jesus.



Each minister has his or her own boundaries about lyrics. Some won't even allow traditional lyrics on Christmas songs, but some will. Most ministers DO accept music from gospel and Christian contemporary sources, so long as any sin/shame verbiage is removed. Technically, it is not legal to alter the lyrics, though I have never seen a church that doesn't do it in some way. Some singers substitute the word "Jesus" for the word "Spirit" and instead of saying "sin" they say "fear".

My "[For Ministries](#)" page has plenty of links to active NT institutions, where you can get an idea of the range and breadth of NT congregations.

2) Connecting to your local NT community.



The fastest way to get up and running is to connect to the other music programs in your area. It can be awkward at first, but it ends up saving massive amounts of time and heartache. Maybe it's just a quick phone call with a specific question, like "I'm new and I'd love to know your top 5 favorite services songs," or maybe you take someone out to lunch and ask them everything, their favorite guest artists, their general repertoire, orchestration, sound equipment, rehearsal structure, etc.

Some places may also have an internet presence, which is worth searching, but does NOT take the place of an actual person to person connection. Real-person connection means sharing resources, warnings about pitfalls, and specific info about your region's pool of available artists. Finding the exact right person to contact is sometimes tricky, as NT centers sometimes don't update their internet presence. Start with a google search on "new thought centers near..." – or you can try the Unity Association or CSL headquarters.

3) Orders of service.

Refer to previous orders of service for your church, as well as other NT churches in that region, and build from there. I personally keep a complete log of all songs performed at the church. Check out this [excerpt](#). You can also listen to complete podcasts of all the Seattle Unity Services at this [link](#), and videos of parts of the services [here](#).



4) Samples, Charts, and Sheet Music



Each church has a slightly different methodology, but hopefully you have a library to draw from already. Whether you do or not, my "[For Ministries](#)" page has links to a wide variety of repertoire sources.



If you need to, you can absolutely contact me for a consult, too.
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