



February 19, 2025

A Note from Jeff Rone

Dear Friends,

Constance Cherry is a United Methodist pastor from Indiana with Ohio roots. In 2012, she published an incredibly detailed book about planning worship services and events entitled *The Worship Architect: A Blueprint for Designing Culturally Relevant and Biblically Faithful Services*.

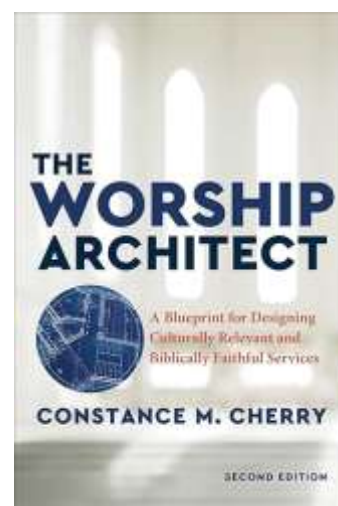
When discussing the importance of selecting high quality worship songs, she says this:

“Plato once said ‘Let me write the songs of a nation, and I care not who writes its laws.’ He had in mind the power of songs to shape and influence whole people groups. In essence, laws will likely be written properly as a result of good theology expressed by the songs to which a culture is exposed. It’s a pretty bold statement to make, but the point is well taken. Look at the effect of popular music on the youth culture of the 1960’s in the United States and you will see what is meant....

“What is true for secular music is true for sacred music as well: ‘Let me write the hymns and the music of the church, and I care very little who writes the theology.’ (R.W. Dale)... **Selecting song texts is one of the most significant things that [those who plan worship] do because they are shaping their congregation’s theology (and therefore worldview) by the texts they select. It is an awesome responsibility.**”

My honest first thought when I read this several years ago was something along the lines of, **“Holy cow! That is a whole lot of pressure!”** And it truly is.

As I look back at my spiritual and life journeys, I now recognize that this book and this specific passage really planted a seed for me — this idea that the songs we sing in church are not supposed to be a way to entertain, a way to highlight individual talents, or an easy way to fill an hour with something other than talking.





Over time, this passage gave me permission to look past the age-old traps:

“This is what we’ve always done.”

“This is what big churches are singing right now.”

“Nobody is paying close enough attention to care about one little lyric here and there.”

What Constance Cherry was saying is that minute for minute, the music of our services receive very similar amounts of time each week. **The texts we present through songs help form and shape our collective theology just**

as much as the sermons do.

I think the idea of this being “an awesome responsibility” is quite the understatement!

Many years have passed since my first reading and initial reaction to Cherry’s book. Thanks to her writings, my own journey and experiences, and some encouragement from Pastor April, I continue to become more and more aware of what the lyrics of the songs are *actually* saying about our church’s theology.

I am really looking forward to sitting down with Pastor April at all three services (<https://hilliardumc.org/welcome-2/new-to-hilliard-umc/#unique>) this Sunday, February 23, to discuss my own personal theological journey, why the words of the songs we sing are so important, and how our careful discernment of the lyrics we sing in church connect to The Whole Story. (<https://hilliardumc.org/current-message-series/>)

See you Sunday!

Jeff



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