



NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION OF  
PASTORAL  
MUSICIANS  
ARCHDIOCESE  
OF KANSAS CITY  
IN KANSAS AND  
KANSAS CITY/  
ST JOSEPH

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## MARK YOUR CALENDARS

**One Call: You Are the Body of Christ Workshop** Aug 5-7 2021  
**Nativity of Mary Independence, MO**

**Skills & Spirituality 2021—Virtual** Sep 2021

**Fundamentals of Basic Theory NPM.org** Tues in Sep

**Skill Builder KC** Summer 2022

## SEE INSIDE PG

Bringing the Flock Home 2

Region 9 News 3

Breath Support Primer 4-6

Helping the Assembly Regain Their Voice 6

# NPM News

Volume IV, Issue I

July 1, 2021

## Liturgical Music in a Post-COVID Church: NPM Statement

“One cannot find anything more religious and more joyful in sacred celebrations than a whole congregation expressing its faith and devotion in song. Therefore the active participation of the whole people, which is shown in singing, is to be carefully promoted.” (*Musicam Sacram* 16)

Week after week, year after year, pastoral musicians have endlessly poured out our gift of song to stir the dwelling of God in every heart. Fourteen months ago, this age-old cycle was disrupted by a worldwide pandemic. The COVID-19 virus attacked the very core of music ministry: fostering full and active communal participation in the liturgy (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 14).

As the pandemic loosens its grip on society, we find ourselves faced with two challenges: logistics and renewal. The logistics of our ministries have been ravished and a great deal of time and effort will be needed to rebuild what has been lost. But we have to ask ourselves what this end product should look like. Can we really go back to the way things were? We are called to do better and be better. The pandemic has revealed countless challenges to us as musicians and as members of the Body of Christ. It has prompted us to grow and move beyond the comforts of our previous life. What lessons will we take with us as we move forward?

Some of the questions we consider include: How can we best re-engage our congregations? What is the role of technology in our ministries? How do we renew our choirs and ensembles when some may have moved out of our parishes or who do not feel ready to rejoin? How do we respond to the summons of ministering to the whole person – not just the liturgical and musical needs but also the emotional and familial needs? We know this new chapter in our lives and in ministry will have its own set of opportunities, and we can be guided by the lessons of the last fourteen months.

The National Association of Pastoral Musicians (NPM) is the membership organization for all

who serve in ministry through this time of rebuilding and renewal. Together, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we pray that God will indeed “renew the face of the earth” (Psalm 104).

(Taken from NPM.org website, dated May 28, 2021)

From the Editor:

As the statement from NPM National said, the logistics of our [liturgical] ministries have been ravished, but signs of a musical and liturgical renewal appear daily. Music ministers in our area climb out of their COVID dens. The Kansas City metro area was under a mask mandate for over a year but now people’s lovely faces are emerging to again share their smiles. Parishes are in different places with liturgical practices returning to a somewhat more normal state, but they are returning.

Archdiocesan and Diocesan recommendations or mandates during this past year were not exactly the same. Pastors have been allowed the final say for some things, so not every parish looked the same during COVID. Conditions in rural areas were not the same as in crowded cities, so differences are not surprising.

But whatever the differences since March 2020, assembly singing has or is returning now. Several church musicians have shared how their joyful tears flowed when they first heard their assembly again praying through song. This ninth issue of our local NPM Chapters’ Newsletter looks at some of the issues of this return to in-person worship, assembly singing and full choir participation. See inside for articles on Bringing the Flock Home, Breath Support and more.

Wherever you are in the process, know that the Holy Spirit is always with you. As you move forward, pray this passage from Tobit 13:7:

So now consider  
what He has done for you,  
and praise Him with full voice.

## One Call Workshop in Independence August 5-7, 2021 by Maria Milazzo

The **One Call Institute** is excited to present three regional events in the Summer/Fall of 2021 and the first one is hosted right here in Kansas City at **Nativity of Mary Parish in Independence, MO on August 5-7, 2021!** The One Call Institute (OCI) seeks to form young people and their advocates to live the call of the Gospel through the ministries of music, prayer, and social justice. These OCI Regional events lead participants in breaking open what it means to “live the call of the Gospel.” (*continued page 3*)

St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, St. Cecilia, St. Gregory, St Ephrem pray for us!

## Bringing the Flock Home by Barbara Leyden

With the lifting of the dispensation to not attend Mass in person, our local parishes may be accelerating the task of bringing the flock home. Many have made Herculean efforts to keep in contact throughout the past 15 months, investing in cameras, sound systems, projector screens and other live-streaming equipment to bring Mass to their worshipers. Videos were made and posted and email systems created. Zoom or other platforms were used to have remote meetings, classes and rehearsals.

If you, or your director of music, have been communicating with music ministers regularly throughout the hiatus, bringing singers back to choirs and cantor ministry may be an easy task as people return eagerly to the ministry they love. If you or your parish have not had the equipment or the means to carry on an electronic, remote ministry, then it behooves each director to get started with whatever works best for your situation. Any and all avenues can be effective when diligently pursued--speak at Mass, send a snail mail letter, email, Facebook, make phone calls or talk to people in person after Mass. **Personal contact is critical**, as is working as a team with the pastor and other parish staff.

As you reach out, try to increase your knowledge of each chorister, cantor and parishioner. Do they work outside the home? What was their COVID experience? Have they buried family and friends this past year? What are their special gifts beyond choral singing that they might bring to the ministry, the choir or the parish?

Parishes in the area vary widely in what is happening in the music ministry. Some assemblies are not singing all the usual Mass music and others continue to have a cantor or small vocal ensemble singing in lieu of the assembly. Some have had a small choir singing throughout the year, others for Christmas and Easter.

Matthew Baumler's handbell choir at St. Mark's in Independence, MO, resumed in September of 2020 following all of the protocols that were required at that time. The parish choir resumed in May of 2021, although both groups are now on summer break. St. Mark's staff is excited to host a "Welcome Back to Mass" party at the end of July with a parish pancake breakfast. **Food is a proven motivator** for building community in parish and choir settings! They are considering a **ministry fair** to help kick off heavy recruiting for all ministries in the fall. Each ministry would set up a booth in their parish center for the weekend event, containing information for their ministry along with various fun activities for individuals to do when they visit the booth. Also under consideration is having a raffle prize for people who actually sign up for a ministry.

Whether you are raring to go or still very fearful of re-starting choirs or assembly singing, communicating the **current science** is important. Scientists are quite sure now that COVID spreads primarily by droplets and aerosols and that close contact with lots of loud talking and singing spreads the disease most effectively. The only way to effectively prevent transmission in a choral situation is for everyone to be vaccinated or at least have immunity from suffering the disease. **Masks** do help to prevent transmission, so if members are still very concerned, welcome them to continue wearing a mask, despite being vaccinated. If non-vaccinated choristers who never had COVID desire to participate, American Choral Directors Association recommendations are for them to wear a mask. ACDA recommends the pre-vaccination protocols be followed if unmasked, unvaccinated people or immune-compromised people are present.

Further, one should consider mask-wearing as a permanent thing, whenever any member is experiencing the tail end of any type of cold or flu with lingering respiratory symptoms, but feels well enough to attend rehearsal. Members attending via Zoom when they are still ailing is also something to consider long-term. When there is an important singing engagement coming up, it may be smart to wear a mask when shopping or any time you are in a large crowd. How many times has a choir been hit hard with colds right before Christmas?

Either journey can work for your music ministry—if you have been very careful and removed singing completely for over a year, your caution shows you care very deeply about their health and you would not ask them to sing unless you felt it was safe. As a priority, allowing the assembly to sing their parts of the Mass is more important than having a choir present, so, if your parish has been very cautious, starting with the assembly singing the Mass Ordinary, Gospel Acclamation and Psalm refrain is most important. Once the assembly has safely and fully reclaimed its rightful worship role, choirs should add their glory.

As your choir resumes, remember to pray together at every rehearsal and before ministering at liturgy. Constantly refer to your choral or cantor work as ministry. Refer back to John Rudzinski's article on the valuable choir rehearsal in Vol. II, Issue II, for more ideas.

Finally, please share your ideas and stories of success on one of our two Chapter Facebook pages to help other parishes and music ministers to bring their own flocks home! Kansas is called: National Assoc of Pastoral Musicians Archdiocese of KC in KS. Missouri is: NPM Kansas City/St Joseph MO Chapter.

## Region 9 and NPM News —Danny Baker

Greetings from your NPM Region 9 representative (and KCMO Chapter Director). I have had the pleasure of chatting with directors from Missouri, Kansas and Iowa over the past few months and getting to know them. On Tuesday, June 22, all the region representatives met with NPM's Executive Director Jennifer Kluge via ZOOM to continue our dialogue on all the exciting things happening at the national and local levels. Registrations for the National Convention in New Orleans are steadily increasing. There are over 600 registrants and, as of this article, 425 of them are in person. The dates and location for the 2022 National Convention have also been announced: Louisville, Kentucky June 22-26, 2022. This July 7-9 will be the first Skill Builder workshop in Reno, Nevada. NPM has reached out and asked if Kansas City would be interested in hosting a Skill Builder workshop in 2022 and we enthusiastically said YES! There is still much discussion and planning to be had before we know more details. Much will depend on what is learned from the Skill Builder workshop being offered in Reno. The main focus right now at the national office is recruitment. They are working hard to provide chapters the tools they need to help recruit and retain past, present, and future members of NPM. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to assist you and your chapters.

Sincerely,  
Daniel A. Baker  
Director of Liturgy and Music  
St. James Catholic Church  
Chapter Director NPM Kansas City-St. Joseph

**Join NPM National—Only \$39  
For a Basic Membership.  
Go to [npm.org](http://npm.org) today to support  
pastoral music and your ministry.**

### **KCMO/St Joe Diocese Virtual Skills & Spirituality Fall 2021**

NPM members who wish to contribute a presentation should email Dr. Mario Pearson [mpearson@kcgolddome.org](mailto:mpearson@kcgolddome.org)

### **One Call Institute Continued**

Through ministerial formation, faith sharing, music, and prayer, young people and their adult advocates examine how they personally and communally respond to their baptismal call to discipleship. Attendees participate in formation sessions led by nationally renowned clinicians and authors, share fellowship with young people and colleagues from neighboring communities, and experience the kind of vibrant liturgy and prayer that is a hallmark of the One Call experience.

This year's theme is **You Are the Body of Christ** and explores how each person is a part of the Body of Christ and how this calls us to discipleship and ministry. The regional events are not full-day experiences, but begin with dinner on Thursday evening and end with lunch on Saturday. Housing is not provided, so transportation to and from Nativity will be required for the three days.

*(Conclusion on page 6)*

Skills and Spirituality 2021 will be presented in a smaller, web and virtual format this year. Below are the planned presentations, which will be available as online videos for parish liturgists and musicians. Additionally, two ZOOM live panel discussions will be scheduled in the fall.

Skills and Spirituality will offer video workshops that will include the following topics:

- Children's music ministry
- Ministering in rural and small parishes
- Pianists transitioning to the organ - practical tips
- New Music Director perspectives
- Pastoral topics for liturgists and musicians
- Organizational skills for musicians
- The role of the Office of Divine Worship to assist parishes
- Art and environment on a shoestring budget
- Zoom panel discussions- Ministry in post-pandemic times/  
NPM convention takeaways.

The pandemic has changed the familiar patterns of ministry in ways that have been challenging. However, it has also created new opportunities to minister and connect with one another. While many aspects of public and parish life are returning to pre-pandemic times, it is well noted that using the virtual formats can help us connect, especially to rural parishes and parishes on the outskirts where travel for workshops are time prohibitive. Watch for the opportunity to register and take advantage of training and networking with your colleagues from the comfort of your home. By Dr. Mario Pearson

## A Breath Support Primer by Barbara Leyden

Choir members and cantors may well have lost some vocal technique if they did not sing regularly at home. Of the five main areas of healthy vocal technique—posture, breath support, laryngeal use, pharyngeal use and articulation—regaining breath support seems especially important. One of the worst aspects of being very ill with COVID was losing lung capacity, feeling short of breath, or even not being able to breathe. Prone breathing was a technique that worked better than ventilators in some cases. Deep breathing for singing is very healthy, as well as helping the singing voice. The Aging Voice article in Vol III, Issue I, briefly discusses pharyngeal space. The following information is a brief review of breath support for singing and speaking.

Three types of breathing are possible for humans: shoulder, rib/chest, and abdominal/belly. Of these three, untrained singers generally try to use clavicular or shoulder breathing, which is the least effective for singing. Although shoulder breathing is most commonly or “naturally” seen, singers must learn not to use it for singing, because it pulls on the larynx (where the vocal cords are) and the pharynx (the open space in the mouth and neck.) The muscles used in shoulder breathing are unable to fill the lungs completely and they are also unable to control exhalation so the singer cannot sustain constant breath pressure when breathing this way. Finally, this type of breathing does not look good in performance. The singers’ shoulders visibly go up and down as they breathe in and out.

Intercostal, rib, and chest are three names used for breathing in which the outer set of muscles between the ribs raise and expand the rib cage as one takes a breath in, and an inner set contracts them as one breathes out. This type of breathing, especially the rib movement during inhalation, should be combined with the third type.

Diaphragmatic, abdominal, or belly breathing means that the abdominal muscles relax, thus visually falling out and perhaps slightly downward. When the diaphragm contracts it lowers in the thorax from its inverse cup shape when relaxed. The term singing or supporting with your diaphragm is often used incorrectly or incompletely. Contrary to what some teachers say or imply, one cannot see or feel the diaphragm directly on the outside of the body. The diaphragm is actually a large, domed sheet of muscle which divides the lungs from other organs in the thorax--stomach, etc. During inhalation it lowers and flattens, which pushes against a full stomach and creates a feeling of pressure down low, even though its true biological function during inhalation is to create a vacuum in the lungs so they involuntarily fill with air. When the diaphragm is relaxed, it is dome-shaped, as shown in the illustration on page five of the diaphragm in both positions—inhalation and exhalation.

When the diaphragm contracts, and pushes the abdominal organs down and forward, it causes a section of the belly right under the sternum (breast bone), called the epigastrium, to bulge outwards. Maintaining balance between the abdominal muscles contracting while the diaphragm slowly relaxes shows visually in trained singers by the epigastrium bulging slightly. If someone presses on that area while a trained singer is singing, both singer and “presser” will feel resistance or pressure. When some teachers ask students to “feel” their diaphragm by pressing on their upper abdomen, they actually are asking them to feel their epigastrium bulge.

One way to naturally feel the tension in the epigastrium is to put your hand in the area right under the sternum and cough lightly. The diaphragm will have to be very strong before one can see an actual bulge, but placing the hand in the area right under the sternum and applying pressure may help singers learn to tighten and maintain tension in the diaphragm. Humans use the diaphragm naturally when having a bowel movement and during childbirth and feel it twitch involuntarily during hiccups. Most of its movement is involuntary. Practicing a deep groan or the muscular feeling of pushing during a bowel movement gives the chance to feel the diaphragm in action, contracting or resisting the abdominal muscles.

Efficient and effective breath support for singers depends on a deep, quick and silent breath, followed by maintaining constant breath pressure and flow by contracting the abdominal muscles, gradually relaxing the diaphragm and keeping the ribs expanded, all of which assist in keeping breath pressure constant against the vibrating vocal folds.

Fortunately, learning to control the rib muscles consciously is easier than the diaphragm, as their movement can be seen more easily on the outside of the body than can much of the singing apparatus. Keeping the ribs high, through posture, and expanded as long as possible during exhalation with muscles, helps maintain constant breath pressure. The singer must counteract the natural tendency of the ribs to relax during exhalation. In fact, the singer should not totally relax the ribs until they are done singing. (see next page)

## Breath Support Continued—Use Rib and Abdominal Breathing

One way to experience the natural expansion of the rib cage during inhalation and contraction during exhalation is to place the hands on the bottom ribs while inhaling and exhaling. The ribs expand and move outward when inhaling. They collapse inward and down naturally when exhaling, but try pushing gently against the ribs with the hands while exhaling to feel the sensation of maintaining breath pressure with the ribs.

Placing one hand on the abdomen and one on the bottom rib during inhalation allows a check on both a relaxed abdomen with space for the diaphragm to flatten, and expanded ribs. Keep the hand on the rib and apply pressure. Keep the ribs expanded as much as possible to help feel internally the proper muscular support. This combined action is strong support that allows the rest of the singing apparatus to operate freely and without excess tension.

A common problem is noisy inhalation. Making a sound while inhaling is vocally damaging when done habitually and is generally caused by excess tension in the pharynx and vocal folds. Inhalation should always be silent and breathing through the nose whenever possible.

The first step in deep, full breaths is learning to relax the abdomen. The belly doesn't have to extend grossly, but moving out should be visible. Learning to open the throat, as well as general relaxation and posture, can be combined with deep inhalation exercises. These exercises also slow the heart rate, lessen tension and anxiety and lend themselves to meditation so they are beneficial when done on a regular basis. Exercises to develop deep breathing will be in the next issue.

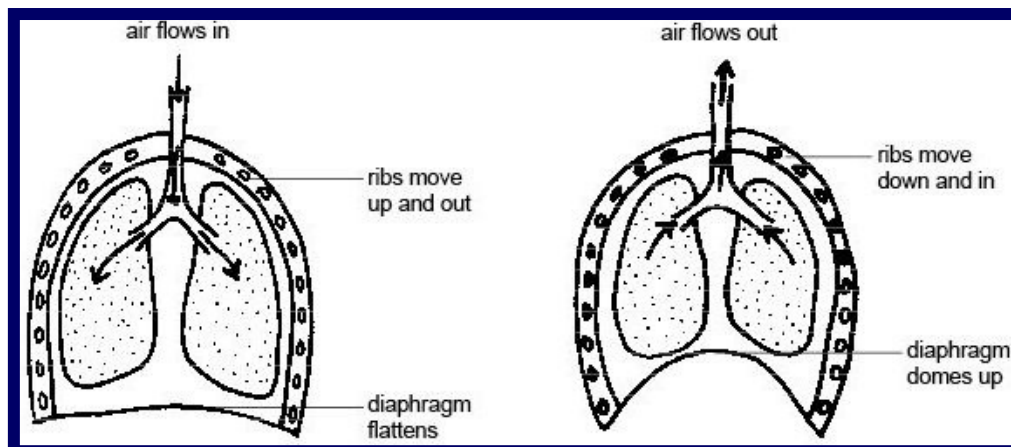
After truly experiencing correct deep inhalation and being able to do it rhythmically and quickly, move on to exhalation. Simply blowing out air is easy, but gradual air release while singing phrases requires control. Concentrate on only one aspect at a time--either posture and abdomen moving in and out first, or ribs expanding and maintaining that expansion while exhaling. After success with each separately, combine them.

Always focus on breathing deeply and trying to use a lot of air. Breath must come before sound. When breath does not initiate and sustain the sound, the vocal folds take over the job, slapping each other--and hurting themselves--in the process. The excess stiffness in the vocal cords needed to sustain sound without constant breath pressure causes a loss in range and flexibility to change pitch. The whole voice box, the neck, mouth and tongue get tense and constrict, generally reducing volume and tone quality.

The most common problem among untrained singers is not using enough breath or breath pressure. Often singers start the sung tone by mechanically bringing the vocal folds together. Heavy use of the voice by people habitually striking their vocal folds for every initiation of sound and every word that begins with a vowel can result in swelling in the folds which causes hoarseness.

The exception to not using enough air is the voice of a young, changing and untrained voice. Teens often have breathy voices, particularly during pubertal changes, as the strength in the muscles of their rapidly-growing laryngeal mechanism does not keep up with the growth for a while. The breathiness will resolve itself if the singer continues to sing with strong breath support and healthy technique. Staccato exercises done properly and exercises using the "ee" vowel are helpful.

Breath support exercises to help learn this technique will be in the next issue.



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## Helping the Assembly Regain Their Voice by The Editor

Many music ministers have spent their lifetime of service striving to encourage the assembly to participate fully and actively in our communal worship, including during sung prayer. Then circumstances of public safety required telling them that their voices were not necessary, even dangerous, for over a year. Even their presence was not allowed for some weeks. The result of this ban and fear is yet to be fully seen but it seems clear that efforts to lead well and encourage sung prayer by the main choir—the assembly, are as critical as ever. Encouraging and welcoming in-person attendance at Mass precedes even this effort and music ministers can lead in this important work.

Articles from our past eight issues address some of the areas. Chloe Stödt's tips on leading the assembly from the keyboard in Vol I, Issue III, are, as always, pertinent and helpful. Kevin Vogt's brief discussion of the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) process his parish uses to evaluate, plan and carry out growth in Vol III, Issue I, may lead you to investigate this collaborative method and use it in your own parish. When you resume choir rehearsal, the tips in John Rudzinski's "Valuable Choir Rehearsal" (Vol II, Issue II) will lead you to greater success. Bob Sandford's comment, that "rehearsal is a practice of love, not violence," should guide us to lead safe and effective rehearsals that build faith, commitment and love, not just skill with a particular piece of music. Music ministries, whether a cantor/organist team, a choir or mixed ensemble, are all small faith groups within the larger parish. Building community cooperation with a focus on God should always be supported and encouraged to grow beyond the bounds of the musical group.

Volume II, Issue II reminded everyone to listen to your assembly closely as you lead them, whether it be from the keyboard or as a cantor. Volume II, Issue I, has an entire article on the Seven Ways to Encourage Assembly Participation. Particularly pertinent to this COVID era are repetition, clear musical leadership, singable music and providing worship materials.

If your assembly is just returning, or just beginning to sing any parts of the Mass, familiar music is the key. This transitional time is not the time to teach new music to the assembly. Some parishes have had the cantor sing everything for the past year with the assembly silent, in accordance with the initial (Arch) diocesan instructions. A transitional period might include having the assembly begin to sing the most important parts of the Mass first in accordance with the Progressive Solemnity guidelines, as summarized in Volume III, Issue II. Again, use a familiar Mass Ordinary and psalm settings.

Perhaps your assembly was participating in the mostly-spoken prayers of the Mass better than they ever sang them. Concentrating on a simple musical arrangement of the Mass Ordinary with perhaps some catechesis on why we sing, rather than say, these prayers might assist the transition. Music's role in extending and heightening the prayer while planting the words deeply in our memory is not always understood.

Playing keyboard with only a soloist singing is not quite the same as leading an assembly. Perhaps a bit more rubato seemed appropriate, and a volume level set to accompany a soloist has become habitual. With a strong cantor, perhaps elaborate improvisations on subsequent verses became the norm. The assembly choir needs clear leadership, hands playing solidly together, without a lot of ornamentation and harmonic improvisation as they find their musical footing again. Volume should be softer under cantor-only verses and signal the assembly that it is their turn on the refrain.

Now might be a good time to take a close look at the hymns and acclamations the parish has sung in the past. Evaluate whether the parish sang each piece well. Are there some tunes that should be retired and, in the future, replaced with a more singable setting?

The assembly needs worship aids of some sort if they are to fully participate in the singing. Our parishes returned to in-person worship with full singing mid-liturgical year, leaving those parishes who buy the yearly Missalette programs in a financial quandary of whether or not to spend that money. Some parishes are fortunate to have projector screens, which have been wonderful during this time with no hymnals or Missalletes. If your parish uses a subscription Missal program something will have to be done to provide worship materials through November: buy the Missal, make a worship aid, or make a seasonal aid of some sort. Remember that music and lyrics of much music is copyrighted and must be used with permission, even in a one-time use worship aid or for putting on a projector screen. The effort required is definitely worth it. The sound of an assembly praying enthusiastically in song is one of the most beautiful sounds in the world!

*(One Call concluded)* High school and early college-aged students are encouraged to attend whether or not they have liturgical ministry experience. Adults who serve as their advocates, either as Music Directors, Liturgists, Youth Ministers, Pastors, Choir Members, Campus Ministers, Catechists, or other adults who are walking this journey of faith with them are encouraged to attend the advocate track. Ideally, a young person would be accompanied by an advocate, but both youth and advocates may participate individually. The \$25 registration fee covers meals, t-shirt, and tuition for the 3-day event. Contact Maria Milazzo at [mmilazzo@nativityofmary.org](mailto:mmilazzo@nativityofmary.org) if the registration fee is a barrier to your attendance. More information can be found on the website at [www.onecallinstitute.org/regionals](http://www.onecallinstitute.org/regionals). Register by Friday, July 23rd using the "Registration" tab on the webpage. The \$25 fee may be paid on the first day of the event with either cash, check, or Venmo. This August is a perfect time to kick off your music ministry for the fall and engage young people in the liturgical life of the church again.