

Energize your ministry with music interns

by Lynn Hurst

The excitement these students bring to the church has helped to double the size of our music programs in one year!

Are your music programs lacking weekly energy and excitement? Are you looking for a way to move your music ministry from a stagnant plateau to a new exciting level, or to move a strong music ministry to an even higher level of excellence?

A fun, exciting and rewarding way to address these challenges is to employ college students as interns—a perfect example of a win-win scenario. The students gain invaluable experience, learn from a seasoned staff, mature in their faith, and gain a sense of belonging to a congregation where they are supported and loved. In return, the congregation receives the benefit of their energetic and enthusiastic leadership along with their fresh insights and



Photo: Lynn Hurst

the joy of helping a student through college. In some situations, the student may be able to use the experience for college credit. I have been blessed by this ministry in three very different church settings.

In a church I served almost 20 years ago, a summer intern program had already been established. Students were recruited from seminaries, Christian colleges, and even Wesley Foundations on college campuses. They were employed for the summer months to develop and run the children and youth

programs of the church along with various other duties, including regular staff meetings and training by the staff. Their pay was in the form of a scholarship to their school with room and board provided by members of the congregation. I was able to use the interns to help run a summer music camp for children. They helped with the music, drama, scenery, costumes, and various other duties while building lasting relationships with the children. I was also able to take the interns on the Youth Choir tour soon after their arrival every summer enabling them to quickly get to know a group of the youth. Using the interns in these ways allowed me to give my adult lay volunteers a much-needed rest for the summer. The children and youth looked forward to a new set of interns every summer with whom to have fun and build life-long relationships.

In the second church setting, I hired music majors from a United Methodist college to be a part of our praise team for the contemporary worship service. They were skilled at drums, guitar, bass and other instruments and learned to be worship leaders, actors in weekly skits and skilled creative worship planners. The students were required to be at one rehearsal a week as well as one worship service. In addition, I hired one intern for the summer who typed all of our worship songs on Power Point slides, created Excel spreadsheets of our worship songs and numerous dramatic skits and was a part of our weekly worship planning team. These students were paid on a monthly basis according to the number of hours worked. Several of these interns were able to use their employment to meet their field education requirement. Many of these interns have remained in the ministry after graduation.

In my current and third church setting,

I hired four music interns from a local college. This particular college is not church affiliated but the students are music majors. The four singers (SATB) have a uniquely wonderful blend as a cappella quartet. I have used them almost weekly since the beginning of the school year to perform a different style of music than our Sanctuary Choir provides. The congregation has embraced the energy and excitement they bring in their gospel/jazz style of singing. The Sanctuary Choir members do not see these students as paid section leaders but as very talented musicians who are helping re-energize the choir and worship. In return, the congregation loves supporting these students in their college music department's recitals and concerts and monetarily helping the students through school. The excitement these students bring to the church has helped to double the size of our music programs in one year! Members of the congregation comment weekly about the joy of having these interns and have even asked, "What can be done to keep this program going every year?"

Guidelines and ideas. First, create a job description including the compensation package. An initial advertisement for the job could be posted at local colleges, colleges within an hour's drive, and churches. Example:

**MUSIC INTERN POSITIONS OPEN
BROADMOOR COMMUNITY CHURCH**

Broadmoor Community Church (United Church of Christ), located at 315 Lake Ave., is in the process of interviewing for 4 music intern positions. The job may include all or some of the following: singing in the Sanctuary Choir, helping with the children's choir and bells, playing an instrument, leading in worship, helping design worship, and running sound. Salary will be determined according to the time worked, an average of \$50 per week. The job begins September 2 and goes through the school year. For more information contact: (person/phone/email)

Second, secure the funding through several possibilities. The church can agree to include this ministry as a budget line item as was done in my first church setting. Another possibility is to set up a designated fund to which congregation members may contribute throughout the year as was done in my second church setting. In this case, there should be a commitment from donors to

cover the salaries for the first four months before hiring. Throughout the year, special concerts could be given by the musical groups in the church to raise money and/or a special offering could be taken on a Music Dedication Sunday. In my third church setting, I have been blessed to have an individual donor who has completely funded the program. Don't rule this out as a possibility as there are often people who are able and willing to do this.

Other considerations:

- If the salary is made in the form of a scholarship directly to the school, taxes are not deducted. If the student wants payment as personal salary, taxes must be deducted.
- Have the intern sign a contract for the agreed-upon number of rehearsals and services for the school year. Currently, I allow the interns to miss two rehearsals during a semester (for sickness, exams, concerts, for example) and still get paid if they are here on Sunday. After that, their salary is adjusted accordingly.
- Use the interns as an avenue to bring in more college students to the church.
- If there are no colleges in your area, consider hiring any students who will be returning home from college for the summer.

The joys and blessings I have received over the years from music interns have always surpassed my expectations. It will be a challenge to expand your music ministry to a teaching music ministry. In so doing, you will be training the next generation for excellence in church music, creating a future for music ministry and in some cases, simply bringing young adults into a full-time commitment to the church. I am certain you will find it to be one of the most joyful and rewarding things you do in your ministry.

What one music intern says

"The internship program at Broadmoor Community Church has allowed me to make friends and acquaintances in my community through the church choir, and to share my musical talents with a broad audience every Sunday morning. I have been able to focus my leadership and performance skills in the church services, and the salary has helped me pay for my college tuition and voice lessons."



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