

Music in First Church of Christ, Scientist, Laguna Beach

By Elizabeth Everett

The Christian Science church appreciates fine music. According to history, music -- especially hymns -- were an everyday occurrence in the home of the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, Mary Baker Eddy. In establishing her concept of church, music had to play a part. The hymns and organ or piano music were intended to spiritualize the thought of the congregation rather than to create a diversion from the sermon or entertain.

The service begins with a classic organ or piano religious prelude composed by beloved composers from pre-Bach to inspired contemporary musicians. A hymn introduces the subject of the lesson-sermon of the week, and the congregation sings all the verses. The texts of the hymns were written over the last two centuries by spiritual seekers from around the world. Those texts meet the members of the congregation exactly where they are in their individual spiritual journeys. The hymns are selected by the First Reader from two hymnals -- the Christian Science hymnals of 1932 and 2018. The First Reader is an elected member of the church who leads the service. Thus, it happens that every branch church has different hymns for the same lesson-sermon.

After The Lord's Prayer, the congregation sings another hymn with organ or piano accompaniment. Church notices are then announced by the First Reader, followed by a vocal solo, usually on a text from the Bible or a poem previously printed in one of the Christian Science magazines, or adapted for the Christian Science understanding of God. There is no choir in the Christian Science church. The Founder of the church, Mary Baker Eddy, felt that the congregation remained actively involved in the service by singing the hymns.

The Sermon is then presented by the two Readers, after which a collection is taken, followed by the third, and final hymn. The service concludes with a postlude on organ or piano.

The church uses a pipe organ (M.P. Moller Opus 9509, 1961ca.), and a Baldwin parlor grand piano. The latter is a Model L, built in 1975, which is particularly useful for accompaniment for the solos, many of which were written for the piano and voice instead of organ and voice. Musicians need not be members of the Christian Science church, but they should be excellent musicians with an open respectful thought.

Further reading

Articles on music in Christian Science churches sometimes appear in the Christian Science magazines, including *The Christian Science Journal* and the Christian Science Sentinel. The links shown below are just a few examples:

[Songs of healing / The Christian Science Journal](#)

[The Organist's Vital Role in a Christian Science Service / The Christian Science Journal](#)

[Music in the Church Service / The Christian Science Journal](#)

[Music and the involved congregation / The Christian Science Journal](#)

[The Importance of Church Music / The Christian Science Journal](#)

<https://journal.christianscience.com/shared/view/261j7j8vglk?s=e>

(JSH-Online is the official website of The Christian Science Journal, Sentinel, and Herald.) This site includes many articles on the importance of music in the Christian Science church and how it influences the open thought for spiritual inspiration

The Organ Historical Society lists this organ at the following: [Pipe Organ Database | M. P. Möller \(Opus 9509, 1961ca.\) First Church of Christ, Scientist.](#)