

James North Community Music

Our church is nearing the end of a new building project. This has been ten years in the making, and has been postponed numerous times over the last two years. It will finally be completed, and it is the first church community center with passive housing apartments in Canada. We will be entering a new form of church. Within this new facility, there will be many programs starting in the fall, and many of them will carry on the same format and function they did in our old building.

A significant benefit to this space is that we can now accommodate more children and youth in those programs. We have fully functional programs for children and youth that have been highly successful at targeting our neighbourhood demographic and culture. We have had adult groups called “community groups”, in which any attender can join and feel included in the church. With all the time and attention devoted to the people already attending programs, it seems there is little time and attention devoted to our new residents. Soon there will be forty-five apartments filled with people, and there is no plan to integrate them into our church community. There are few programs designed to include them and to create space for them to build relationships with one another.

Where are the programs seeking to include our new residents? How will we be reaching out to these people? How will we integrate them into their new homes and unique living experiences?

What better way to build relationships with our new neighbours than by making music together? I believe that music should be included in the plan to integrate our new neighbours into our church communities. Playing music together will help quickly build strong relationships

between the individual residents and foster community. A community music program will also create space for our church members to get to know some of the new residents. Our church needs a community music program designed to create space for residents to play music together. This program will seek to narrow the divide between “house” and “home”. This program will be committed to providing residents the tools they need to grow as individuals - spiritually and relationally. This program will reach a deep need in the hearts of its members - to be known and understood through musical expression.

Outline

Structure

- One evening meeting per week for one hour time periods.
- Present a musical concept through various styles and incorporate scaffolding methods that build on previously taught concepts as the weeks progress.
- Final optional presentation of the group in an informal setting such as a coffee house, pre worship service music, or video recording.

Objective

- Create an inclusive group of music makers that represent our church and resident communities.
- Facilitate an avenue for musical expression through mutual learning, collaboration, and presentation.

Week 1 (Coffee House)

Where: Foyer near the kitchen

Goal: To create an informal atmosphere for the residents of the apartments to meet each other and listen to music together.

Content: I will assemble a band of volunteer musicians from our church worship teams and we will perform various styles of music throughout the night. We will also invite people to sing along with a few crowd favourites to initiate musical involvement from the attenders. There will be plenty of free coffee and snacks. Attenders are encouraged to fill out cue cards found on the tables with some of their favourite songs and why they enjoy them. These will be taken into consideration for the following week’s coffee house

Week 2 (Coffee House)

Where: Foyer near the kitchen

Goal: To increase individual participation and to gauge interest in further music making through individual discussion with attenders.

Content: A different band of volunteer musicians from our church worship teams performing various styles of music, playing what was written on cue cards the previous week, and also taking requests from attenders. We will be inviting people to sing along, and there will be free coffee and snacks again. There will be sign up sheets on the tables for anyone to leave their email address if they would like to continue music making. Let attenders know that next week all are welcome to join in music making in the gymnasium.

Week 3

Where: Gymnasium

Goal: Rhythm, singing, and style

Content: The goal of this week is to meet everyone in the group and to learn some basic rhythm exercises using bucket drums. Drumsticks will be provided. We will also be sharing about our own personal music styles and why we enjoy them. Submit one song to Jamie for future learning. As part of our learning of musical style and expression, members are encouraged to keep a written or recorded journal with thoughts they are processing, poetry they may want to write, or questions for the group to be discussed in following weeks. Members will also learn basic vocal technique through singing a unison melody and through call and response exercises. If members are comfortable with independent singing, add clapping. Start at a slow tempo and gradually increase speed. Members meet in the gymnasium, spread out, and enjoy the echoing of their voices and clapping.

Journal/Homework: Reflect on why you enjoy a particular style, and why others may enjoy a different style. Take time to listen to the songs that were shared in class. Reflect on the feeling of using your own voice to communicate through song. What is your vocal range? Is it more comfortable to sing high or low? Take some time to review the clapping and singing exercises from class.

Week 4

Where: Classroom

Goal: Apply singing and clapping to members' own music recommended in Week 1.

Content: Apply the knowledge of rhythm and singing to the music preferences of the class. Listen to a song from the member-chosen repertoire as a listening activity. Ensure the song selected has melody and harmony in the vocal line. Discuss the differences between melody and harmony. All members sing the melody line together. All members sing the harmony line together. Half the members sing melody, the other half sings harmony. Switch parts and repeat. When comfortable, add clapping to the melody and harmony.

Journal/Homework: What did it feel like to sing and clap to a song that you love? Did you get to know something new about the other members through musicking together? How does this affect your view of humanity? What aspects of singing with others are different than singing alone? If you could draw a picture of harmony, what would you draw? Continue listening to songs with harmony and practice singing or identifying the two or more parts.

Week 5**Where:** Classroom**Goal:** Improvising rhythm and notes**Content:** Members are encouraged to bring instruments. We will play through chord charts of the members' selected songs and improvise melody and harmony throughout. Each member of the group will have time to either sing solo or have an instrumental solo as the rest of the group supports them musically. Discuss song lyrics and the popular and oppositional meanings of songs chosen.**Journal/Homework:** What was challenging about solo playing? What creative process do you work through in your mind to personally prepare for a solo? Practice improvising on your instrument this week. How does practicing improve your creative process? If you could capture, in three words or less, the idea behind the lyrics of the song you chose, what would those words be?**Week 6****Where:** Church Basement Studio**Goal:** Record what you have learned so far.**Content:** Schedule a one-on-one half-hour time slot to work in Bandlab with Jamie. Practice recording vocals for your suggested song and experiment with adding different drum loops. Continue working on drumlab remotely throughout the term if possible.**Journal/Homework:** Listen to the recordings of your own voice on Bandlab. What aspects of your sound did you like? What didn't you like? As you are able, record your voice on Bandlab singing your chosen song, and try to create a sound that you enjoy more than your previous attempt.**Week 7****Where:** Classroom**Goal:** Work on songs for informal or formal presentation**Content:** Decide as a group which song(s) to practice more diligently in order to present in different formats. Decide with the group whether we want to video record the song(s), present at a coffee house, or present before a church service. Start collectively working on the song(s).**Journal/Homework:** Try to practice the presentation song(s) at least once a day in preparation for presentation. Meet another group member and work on the song(s) together if you can.**Week 8****Where:** Church Basement Studio**Goal:** Record melody and harmony. Include an improvised solo.**Content:** Schedule a one-on-one half-hour time slot to work in Bandlab with Jamie. Explore aspects of EQ, virtual drum kit, and other features of Bandlab. Bring an instrument.**Journal/Homework:** In reflecting on making your own music, what has been challenging? What has been rewarding? What are some areas of personal growth you have experienced?**Week 9****Goal:** Review presentation song(s) in preparation for performance.

Content: Discuss members' perceptions and fears of presentation. Discuss the purpose of making music and sharing music with others. Discuss the journey from week 1 to week 10. Rehearse song(s) for presentation. Record presentation (if video presentation).

Journal/Homework: What were your initial thoughts on our presentation? Reflect on your musical and personal growth since week 1. Follow up with Jamie and discuss with him any feedback you have on the past few months of music making.

Summary

I designed this plan to include multiple methods of inclusive and collaborative music making. Through the use of rhythm and vocal exercises, my goal is to include instruments that are easily accessible by all members of the group. I also wanted to include a personal and relational component, which worked out to each individual having two, one-on-one sessions in which I can check in with each member to see how they are doing with the music. These sessions also include working on a Bandlab project together, and opening up the possibility of collaborating through technology.

I wish that this were a rigid plan with no deviation in practice, but I anticipate that that will not be the case. This plan will likely require on-the-fly adjustment depending on the number of members that show up and the level of comfortability in singing and performing in front of each other. There will be no way to determine the speed at which the group will progress through the outlined content, so there may be an added week to the above schedule.