

Over the course of my music ministry internship, there were many things that I felt I did well. Every week, I got comments both from the members of my volunteer choir and the congregation about how great my music selection was. I also did a good job of singing accurately and strongly in a way that is fitting for a cantor leading the choir and the congregation. Another thing I did well with was taking suggestions, from including the notes for the psalm's refrain in our lyric sheets to printing out lyrics for songs for adoration (which wasn't done last year) to considering song suggestions that I got from both choir members and the congregation. Additionally, I collaborated well with my right-hand man J. Paul and with the other members of my choir. There was never a time that I am aware of that anyone felt left out or unheard. Rehearsals were a team effort, and we always felt well-prepared by the end. Communication was also a strong suit of mine. I made sure to keep everyone updated on rehearsal times, song lists, special events, etc. Finally, I think I was also good with adaptability, particularly when there were some uncertainties with what instrumentalists would be available to play for Mass. I kept this in mind when planning out my songs and everything always ended up working out.

There are still plenty of things that maybe didn't go as well as I had hoped during my internship. For one, I had been hoping to find a pianist that would be able to replace J. Paul by the end of the semester. I really did not put as much time and energy toward that as I should have. Since J. Paul is taking the interim music minister position, it isn't as time sensitive now, but it will still need to be done by the end of the spring semester. Another thing I struggled a bit with was time management. Balancing my academic responsibilities with my music ministry duties was quite a difficult task to undertake. At the beginning of the semester, I had this whole schedule outlined for when I would get certain music ministry things done throughout the week,

and by the end of the semester I was just trying to get things done whenever I had a smidge of time. I also still want to get better at leading rehearsals, both alongside J. Paul and (this will probably be highly unlikely next semester, but still) by myself. I really need to work on confidence in my own choices and projecting that when explaining things to my choir.

Throughout this experience, I have learned many things about myself and music ministry. For one, I learned the importance of setting both short-term and long-term goals for myself. It's something you hear about all the time, but sometimes you just need to hear it applied to the specific task at hand. Setting goals for music ministry is especially important because it's something that can get tedious and repetitive, so it's good to always have something to work toward. Another thing that I learned about was different styles of leadership and the importance of knowing what type of leader that I am. There are definitely certain traits or characteristics that usually come to people's minds when they think of a leader, but really anyone can be a leader—you just have to learn how to utilize your strengths and personality in an effective way. I also learned the importance of making a rehearsal plan each week. They keep practices on track and eliminate the frustration of stumbling through songs without really knowing what the end goal is. Something else quite important that I learned was the necessity of reflecting on the place of music ministry in a church and the reason why I am doing this. It can be easy to just go along with the flow of doing the same thing week after week, so it is vital to take a step back and realize the impact that music ministry has on the congregation, the choir, and myself. Along those lines, I also learned the importance of asking for feedback from my choir and their motivation for being a part of music ministry. It really helps to put things back in perspective.

Of course, there are still plenty of things that I need to learn for me to be the best music minister I can be in the future. Regarding my musical skills, there are many things for me to

improve on. I'm hoping that continuing to take class piano will help me get to the point where I would be able to at the very least be able to accompany myself through a Mass or Adoration and hopefully eventually with a choir as well. Taking choral conducting will also help me to learn skills that will be useful for directing a group of musicians. In addition, I want to improve on my leadership skills. That's not something that will magically get better one rehearsal, it's something that I'll have to work on bit by bit for a while. The balance between staying true to myself and stepping outside of my comfort zone is something that I've always struggled with, and that's something that definitely applies to working on myself as a leader. I also want to work on finding ways to increase participation among my choir members and getting to the point where we can have more parts and solos and such. They need to get more comfortable with the setting and have me there to encourage them through these things. Lastly, it's important for me to continue my self-reflection beyond this internship. I need to make a habit of regularly reflecting on my music ministry journey, seeking feedback, and setting new goals for my development.

This internship was a fantastic opportunity for me to get firsthand experience working as a music minister. I learned so much this semester and I can't wait to keep on going next semester!