

both sides now

Five Things that Pastors Would Like to Tell Cantors

by Nancy Raabe

“Both Sides Now” is a resource for both clergy and cantors. The column explores the working relationship between the pastor and the musician in a Lutheran congregation. It offers suggestions, advice, and encouragement for all parties who are committed to the sacred vocation of leading worship in today’s world.

1. Let’s work together on worship planning.

Sometimes one party takes more of a lead than the other in putting together services and the calendar, perhaps due to congregational history, job descriptions, or personalities, but I value collaboration. While the pastor has the final decision on music and liturgy, I welcome your professional expertise on worship, music, and the Lutheran experience. I suggest we meet often to do our planning and not just with the worship committee. We could debrief on Mondays about what went well on Sunday and what didn’t. Let’s play off both our strengths and keep worship lively and truly Lutheran.

2. I receive a lot of feedback that is meant for you.

Our members have many opportunities to talk with me—after the service, during fellowship, at various meetings, and more. As you know, people are often vocal about hymn choices and how the music is played. I support you and will use my best judgment as to what I pass along to you: some comments are constructive and some are not, and then there are those we both have heard many times. The feedback that I bring to you will relate to areas on which we can work together in the best interests of the congregation.

3. The church must balance the music budget with a lot of other needs.

The council and I love the music program and want it to succeed. But there are other functions of the congregation that need support, too. Keep your program at the highest

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level, keep increasing the number of members involved in music, and keep making your case for continued and increased support. Have members of the choir or band make a point of getting involved in various ministries at the church, and others likely will reciprocate. I will always lobby on your behalf, as I must as well for education, outreach, facilities, and community involvement.

4. Try coming up with alternative sources of revenue earmarked for the music program.

Go beyond the budget and create new streams of financial support. These might include finding sponsors to underwrite hymn festivals or seasonal concerts and recitals, and making and distributing recordings that can be purchased. You could offer the choir or band for member weddings or funerals, for a fee that would go back into the program, or for various community events. Run these ideas by me and the council. Be creative!

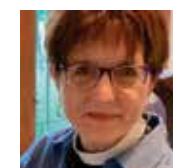
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5. Let’s have lunch on a regular basis.

Our meetings at the church are well and good, but let’s do more. The better we know each other, the better we can work together as colleagues. Let’s add social occasions to our calendar when we talk business for only part of the time, so that we can develop our life together as ministers of the gospel.

Next time: Best Practices for Clergy/Cantor Relationships

Send your comments, experiences, and challenges to nancy@nancyraabe.com for discussion in future columns. May God bless you and your ministry, today and always.



Nancy M. Raabe is the pastor at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Marshall, WI. Previously Nancy served as music director at congregations in Wisconsin and Ohio. She has written three volumes of *One-Minute Devotions for the Church Musician* based on readings for all three lectionary cycles (St. Louis: MorningStar, 2010, 2011, and 2011).

ALCM Employment Resource Update

In early 2019, the ALCM board asked that a task force be created to revise and update employment resources. Led by Region 2 president Ryan Hostler, this group worked to assemble newly revised resources not only for members but for all congregations seeking musicians of every style, from volunteer to full-time. This resource will be available to everyone for free on the ALCM website. The task force gathered in person for three face-to-face meetings and also had many phone calls. ALCM has recently posted the initial set of resources of this living and dynamic project on the ALCM website: alcm.org/employment-resources/.

The task force has worked diligently to include the vision and purpose of ALCM in all we publish. Our starting work was to survey the more than 500 parishes that have used the job-posting services of ALCM in the past years. Those responses and feedback have helped shape the outline, process, and resources we are offering to the church. We are continuing our work, including salary and benefit guidelines, which can be challenging in our ever-changing world, geography,

and culture. Also, this resource is being designed to be a living and changing resource that will be updated easily and available to all church bodies, parishes, and musicians. The task force includes a wide variety of voices and lenses that represent various experiences of hiring and being hired, from volunteer to full-time church musician.

On behalf of the task force, we thank those who have responded to our surveys and questions about your processes. We also thank those who might be contacted in the future for your openness and help. We welcome feedback and thoughts about what might have helped you in your congregation in the search for a parish musician, or you as a musician in the hiring process. Keep an eye out for additional resources being posted soon, and thank you for sharing this resource with your fellow colleagues and church leadership.

ALCM Employment Task Force

Kevin Barger, Rev. James Boline, Cheryl Dieter, Ryan Hostler (chair), Anne Krentz Organ, Paul Soulek, John Weit