

Is It Safe to Sing? In Our Sanctuaries, Our Streets, On Social Media

Thursdays for the Soul

June 12, 2020

Singer-songwriters Tracy Howe Wispelwey, Andra Moran, and Lea Morris shared their gifts of music and insights about singing. Many resources were shared. A recording of this webinar may be found at <https://youtu.be/MpqMYA8rgfY>.

Tracy Howe Wispelwey tracyhowemusic.com

During this time of sheltering at home and social distancing, it is important to find connectedness in community.

Gathered Here (*New Century Hymnal* #742)

Gathered here in the mystery of this hour
Gathered here in one strong body
Gathered here in the struggle and the power
Spirit draw near.

This can be sung as a round.

Is singing safe?

Singing is like a communal breath; it is a demonstration of our interconnectedness.

When gathering for an hour or more in an indoor space, everyone is breathing the same air. Physical distancing, plexiglass barriers separating the choir from the congregation, masks don't matter. Singing is NOT safe in sanctuaries for now. Singing outdoors is safer, but must still maintain physical distancing. When singing, one can project droplets up to 16 feet.

Gathering in the streets, like in protests: would recommend turning a chant into a beat (e.g., "Black Lives Matter"). One can use a drum, one's body, almost any surface to beat. When a large group beats together, it carries the same kind of communal power and force as singing. However, it may not always be appropriate.

Andra Moran andramoran.com

She is a singer, songwriter and touring musician living in Nashville, TN.

During the quarantine, her identity has really been shaken. She has always used singing to encourage, gather, and bring people together. Singing has been her primary connecting tool in ministry.

She is also a part-time worship pastor at Woodmont Christian Church (900 members). Not being able to make music with other people has been hard.

Musicians she sings with are also struggling and many are unemployed. Check on your musicians—they may be having a hard time.

The learning curve for technology has been steep for her. It is hard to learn new things when you are in a traumatic time.

Trying to be creative during a time of extreme stress is tricky.

This has been an emotionally challenging, but spiritually enriching time.

She has felt a disruption to her sense of call.

There is no energetic exchange when singing alone to a screen.

Science shows us that if silence is a “0” in terms of level of contagion of the coronavirus, talking increases the level by ten times and singing increases the level by 70 times.

Her church has moved to drive-in worship services where she sings from a stage outdoors. She is 10 – 20 feet away from everyone, including the musicians. Most worshippers wear masks.

Do NOT share a microphone with anyone.

This can be a dry season for musicians creatively. This is a natural part of quarantining. If you are experiencing a lack of creativity, you are not the only one. Wherever you are, whatever is happening in your life, you are doing the best you can under the circumstances. There are ups and downs to creativity. Being together, even when we are physically apart, is important.

Andra shared her song, “Can You Make Me Brave?” <https://youtu.be/IFJcyIxaZ4Y>

Sheet music for Andra’s music can be downloaded through Etsy: <https://www.etsy.com/shop/AMMOMusic>

Some of her songs may be found in *Chalice Praise*, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) song book.

Lea Morris thisislea.com

Lea is a singer and songwriter living in Alexandria, VA.

Powerful metaphor: When walking through the valley of the shadow of death, be careful not to pitch a tent. Grieve as you must, for it is part of the process, but do so with the knowledge that the intention is to move through it. Know when it’s time to move on.

She has become somewhat of an expert on technology and shared several resources:

Apps: Garage Band (iOS)
Audacity (Windows)

Discord } technologies that allow people to sing together in real time;
Jam Kazaam } new technologies are emerging

Loopy HD (iOS)
A Cappella from PicPlay (sing & collab music maker)

Equipment: Looper
Boss RC505

At this time of sheltering at home, there is one song leader and everyone else is muted and singing along from home. It is not possible to sing live on Zoom together because of a sound delay.

Creating video collages: Lea will record a song, then send it out to all the singers and musicians, who will listen to the music and record themselves singing or playing their part. Then all the tracks come back to Lea, who joins them all in a collage.

Is it safe to sing?

For Lea, singing is not optional. The question is how to do it safely.

She shared two songs:

“I Am Listening”

“Wake Up in America” <https://youtu.be/srtMIJBgrI>

On thisislea.com, one can download this video and share it widely for free!

Copyright issues:

Singing a song in a worship service in church and streaming a video online involve two different copyright issues.

The UCC (Worship Ways and UCC Resources) has paid licensing fees for a number of hymns and songs and offers videos for local churches to use free of charge. (See UCC->Worship Ways->Coronavirus: Prayers, Worship options, Pastoral responses, for more resources)

Lea has created a song archive (hopesingseternal.me) and has posted her songs there; songs are available for use for a licensing fee. People can email her at thisisleadmusic@gmail.com with questions, comments, or requests to use her music.

Musicians appreciate knowing how their songs are being used; donations for the use of their songs are welcomed and appreciated.

[End of webinar]

Other resources shared through Chat:

“Dialogues on a Safe Return to Choral Singing” (Facebook group): <https://www.facebook.com/groups/260857678364436>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/09/arts/music/choirs-singing-coronavirus-safe.html?referringSource=articleShare>

Copyright issues:

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=Y-zknnH5RJA&feature=youtu.be>

Legal Considerations for Online Worship: What Pastors and Worship Leaders Need to Know <https://youtu.be/Y-zknnH5RJA>

A good mic is Blue Yeti USB (about \$130).

Comments through Chat:

Humming does not project droplets as much and is less dangerous than singing, but still may put people at risk. It may be an alternative to singing in protests, when outdoors only.

When singing outside, it helps to add fans to create more air movement, which will disrupt particles.

Even a soloist singing indoors is not recommended. No wind instruments indoors, either. Particles can even get into HVAC system indoors and be circulated in the shared air.

One can change audio settings in Zoom—look for how-to videos on You Tube.

[Other resources from the webinar may be found at the end of the recording of the webinar.]