

A New Approach to Prelude and Postlude

What I've Learned as a Temple Organist, or, Listen to the Still, Small Voice

Prelude Basics:

- Play all the verses, but at least two
- Change registration or manuals on every verse
- Don't Compete for Volume
- Keep it Simple, and Play the Hymns
- Embrace Silence
- Do Not Look Around
- Play with the Spirit

It's **HARD WORK** to prepare the congregation for worship. What worked last week won't work this week, and what works this week won't work next week. The energy of the congregation changes from week to week, and from minute to minute.

Some suggestions:

- Lower the volume
- Change the style of the pieces (hymns, trios, full arrangements, solo/accompaniment); don't play your prelude from the same book/arranger.
- Re-set the volume level of the chapel by allowing silence. Remember the quote attributed to Claude Debussy's quote, "Music is the silence between the notes."
- Play reverence songs. If they don't work, play the first verse somewhat loudly, and bring down the volume significantly for the second verse.
- Do something unexpected as your last prelude piece. Utilize chimes, play something upbeat, after playing from the hymnal play a new arrangement that you've carefully prepared. Mix it up as the Spirit directs.

Postlude:

At the end of the closing prayer, the congregation audibly voices, "Amen," which is followed by just a beat of silence before everyone starts to stand up, gather things together, or chat with a neighbor. Seize this precious moment! By beginning postlude at this time, the congregation intuitively feels the Spirit of the music and is guided to be more reverent and reflect on the music that is being played.

Remember: Postlude music is not exit music. It's not celebratory music that signifies the meeting is over and it's time to stretch our legs and visit. It is music that extends the spirit of the meeting.

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