

Jim Ragotzkie on Church Music in the COVID-19 Age

Many scientists consider singing, wind instruments unsafe, says Jim Ragotzkie

ALBANY, NY, UNITED STATES, September 21, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- COVID-19 has changed how individuals accomplish almost all of their everyday tasks, from shopping to working to recreational pursuits. The virus also has changed how they worship. One challenge for church leaders is how to provide meaningful worship experiences without the use of vocal music or wind instruments. Churches can meet this challenge in creative ways, says church musician Jim Ragotzkie.

Most scientists consider singing and [the use of wind instruments to be risky, says Jim Ragotzkie](#). Singing creates aerosols, which are super-fine droplets that travel several feet and linger in the air for a long time. Singing also makes more aerosols than breathing or talking. Typically, talking produces ten times the aerosols that breathing does, and singing produces 60 times the aerosols. The deep breathing required in singing also inhales aerosols deeper in the lungs, and masks do not adequately protect against fine aerosols, says Jim Ragotzkie.

Wind instruments also initiate a spray of aerosols and require deep breathing and forceful exhalation. A peer-reviewed study of the vuvuzela found that this instrument produced 100 times the aerosols of breathing. While peer-reviewed studies of other instruments have not been released, anecdotal evidence is that other [wind instruments, especially horns, are risky, says Jim Ragotzkie](#).

Churches, however, can use other types of music and rhythm in worship. For example, if churches have the technology required, a soloist or family ensemble could record songs at home that are then played to the congregation. They could use instrumental music from non-wind instruments, says Jim Ragotzkie. Worship leaders also could encourage the congregation to participate by clapping or playing small percussion instruments. Worship can feature more handbell choirs. Soloists also could teach songs to the congregation online that they can sing at home during the week, Jim Ragotzkie says.

Choir members also could use this time as a way to reach out to the congregation. For example, they could ask each member his or her favorite hymn and call them during the week to sing it to them. During the call, they also could discover any pastoral needs, says Jim Ragotzkie.

Music directors also can choose hymns for meditation. They could send the hymn of the week, with lyrics, out to the congregation several days ahead of time and invite the congregation to meditate on the hymn throughout the week, says Jim Ragotzkie. The worship service might then include a time when congregants share their reflections, either oral, written, or illustrated, with the rest of the congregation, says Jim Ragotzkie.

[Jim Ragotzkie is a church organist and member of the American Guild](#) of Organists in New Albany, NY, and the Association of Lutheran Musicians. Jim Ragotzkie also is a member of the Jubilate Singers.

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