

**NEWS FROM LYNNE PABST**

***Our Certified Christian Educator and POINT Partner***

**Announcement:** The “Mandated Reporter Training” on Saturday, June 27, 2020 at Grove Presbyterian Church, Danville, PA **has again been postponed.** The PA Family Support Alliance has announced that it will do no face-to-face trainings through July. At that point, a new date will be chosen and advertised.

**You are invited to participate in a discussion of VBS/Camp alternatives in this time of COVID 19.** May 27<sup>th</sup> via Zoom. Time and link will be sent at a later date. Please send questions you would like covered to [nurture@grovepres.org](mailto:nurture@grovepres.org).

**What! No Singing in Worship!**

The word is out. Singing can spread coronavirus droplets much further than speaking. The power with which air comes from the mouth when singing projects the droplets much farther and can force them through masks. Therefore, chorus, choirs, vocal groups are remaining in shutdown. Congregations as they re-enter sanctuaries are instructed to curtail congregational singing. But congregational singing is at the core of worship. What are we to do?

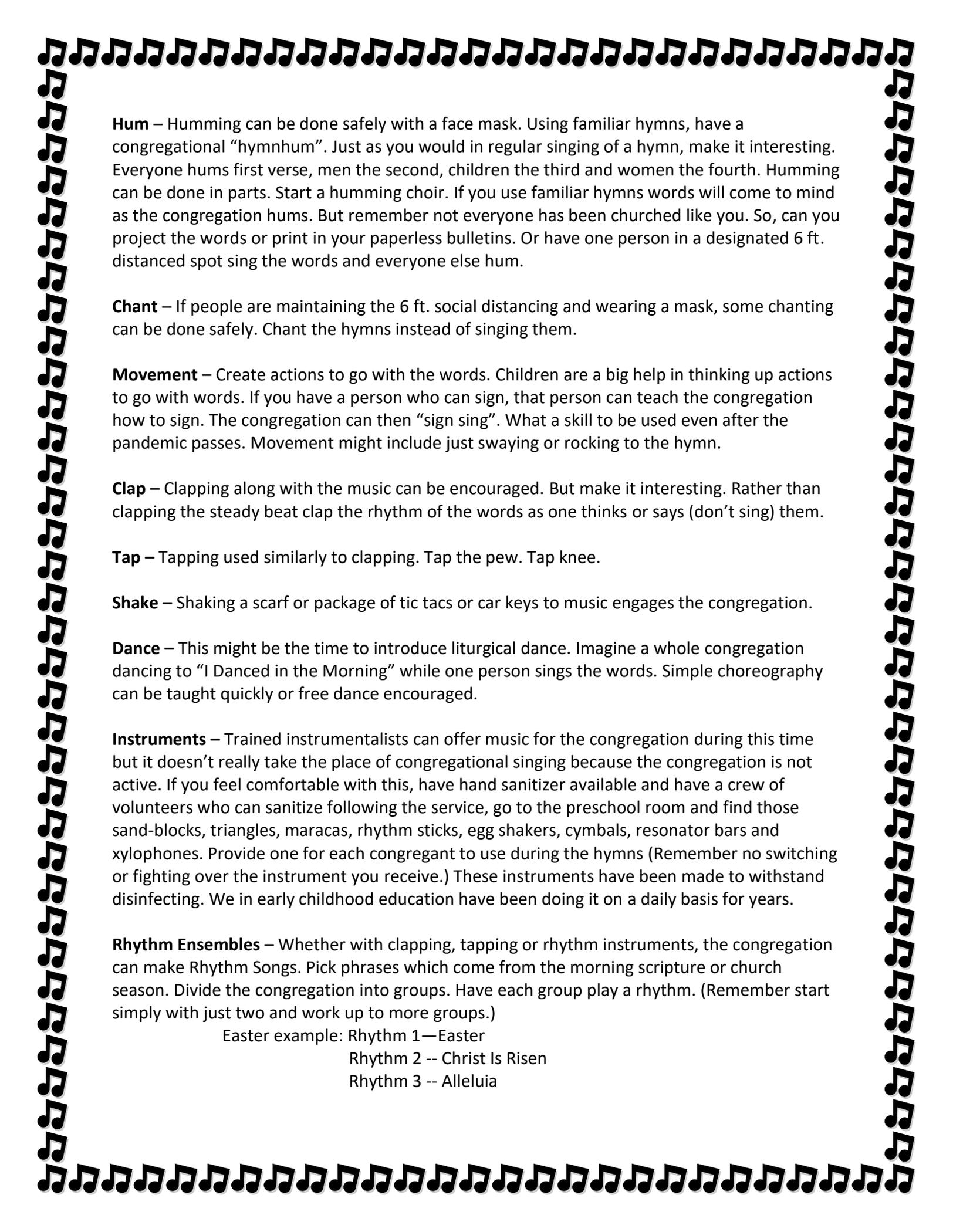
While biased by my years of work with children birth to five, I turn to them.

“Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.” (Mark 10:14b-15)

“and little children will take care of them.” (Isaiah 11:6d)

Then I ask what is it that children do? They do what they can and they do it with enthusiasm, energy and wonder. When I teach movement and music for young children, I remind my students of those musical developmental stages. While infants can match pitch at 3 months, they do not sing melodies at that age. Instead they like to play cooing games imitating sounds. Toddlers cannot play a rhythm but when music is heard they enthusiastically bounce to it. While 3-year-olds may sing a whole song in the backseat of a car, they have not developed a beat awareness which allows them to sing in groups. Instead they enjoy using instruments. That 5-year-old masters singing in unison in small groups but are easily thrown off by someone singing a different rhythm or pitch. They prefer the simple and repetitive songs which they can manipulate and change.

What do we do if we cannot sing corporately? We respond like we did as children engaging with enthusiasm, energy and wonder using skills we have. We can hum, chant, move, tap, clap, shake, dance, and play instruments.



**Hum** – Humming can be done safely with a face mask. Using familiar hymns, have a congregational “hymnum”. Just as you would in regular singing of a hymn, make it interesting. Everyone hums first verse, men the second, children the third and women the fourth. Humming can be done in parts. Start a humming choir. If you use familiar hymns words will come to mind as the congregation hums. But remember not everyone has been churched like you. So, can you project the words or print in your paperless bulletins. Or have one person in a designated 6 ft. distanced spot sing the words and everyone else hum.

**Chant** – If people are maintaining the 6 ft. social distancing and wearing a mask, some chanting can be done safely. Chant the hymns instead of singing them.

**Movement** – Create actions to go with the words. Children are a big help in thinking up actions to go with words. If you have a person who can sign, that person can teach the congregation how to sign. The congregation can then “sign sing”. What a skill to be used even after the pandemic passes. Movement might include just swaying or rocking to the hymn.

**Clap** – Clapping along with the music can be encouraged. But make it interesting. Rather than clapping the steady beat clap the rhythm of the words as one thinks or says (don’t sing) them.

**Tap** – Tapping used similarly to clapping. Tap the pew. Tap knee.

**Shake** – Shaking a scarf or package of tic tacs or car keys to music engages the congregation.

**Dance** – This might be the time to introduce liturgical dance. Imagine a whole congregation dancing to “I Danced in the Morning” while one person sings the words. Simple choreography can be taught quickly or free dance encouraged.

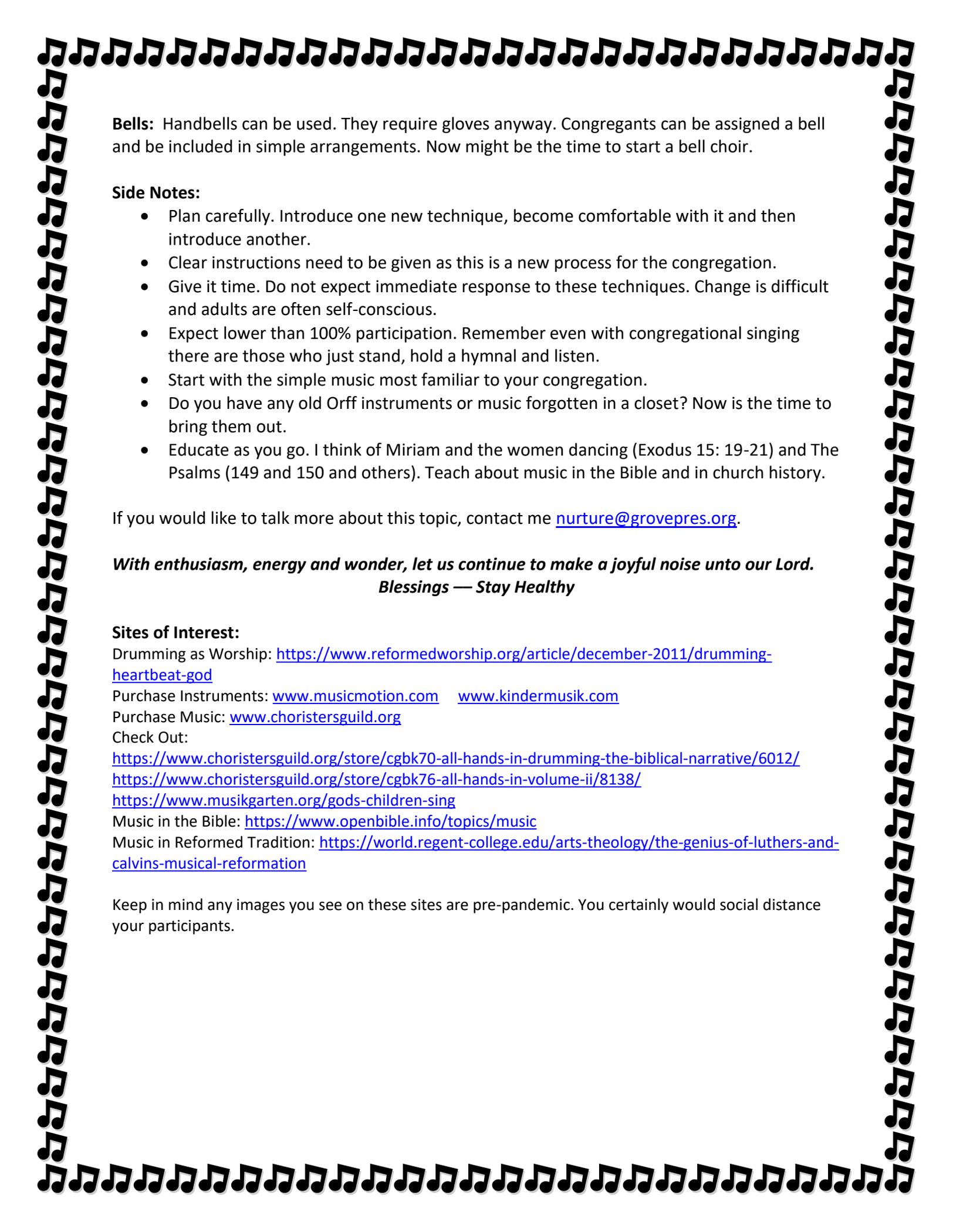
**Instruments** – Trained instrumentalists can offer music for the congregation during this time but it doesn’t really take the place of congregational singing because the congregation is not active. If you feel comfortable with this, have hand sanitizer available and have a crew of volunteers who can sanitize following the service, go to the preschool room and find those sand-blocks, triangles, maracas, rhythm sticks, egg shakers, cymbals, resonator bars and xylophones. Provide one for each congregant to use during the hymns (Remember no switching or fighting over the instrument you receive.) These instruments have been made to withstand disinfecting. We in early childhood education have been doing it on a daily basis for years.

**Rhythm Ensembles** – Whether with clapping, tapping or rhythm instruments, the congregation can make Rhythm Songs. Pick phrases which come from the morning scripture or church season. Divide the congregation into groups. Have each group play a rhythm. (Remember start simply with just two and work up to more groups.)

Easter example: Rhythm 1—Easter

Rhythm 2 -- Christ Is Risen

Rhythm 3 -- Alleluia



**Bells:** Handbells can be used. They require gloves anyway. Congregants can be assigned a bell and be included in simple arrangements. Now might be the time to start a bell choir.

**Side Notes:**

- Plan carefully. Introduce one new technique, become comfortable with it and then introduce another.
- Clear instructions need to be given as this is a new process for the congregation.
- Give it time. Do not expect immediate response to these techniques. Change is difficult and adults are often self-conscious.
- Expect lower than 100% participation. Remember even with congregational singing there are those who just stand, hold a hymnal and listen.
- Start with the simple music most familiar to your congregation.
- Do you have any old Orff instruments or music forgotten in a closet? Now is the time to bring them out.
- Educate as you go. I think of Miriam and the women dancing (Exodus 15: 19-21) and The Psalms (149 and 150 and others). Teach about music in the Bible and in church history.

If you would like to talk more about this topic, contact me [nurture@grovepres.org](mailto:nurture@grovepres.org).

*With enthusiasm, energy and wonder, let us continue to make a joyful noise unto our Lord.  
Blessings — Stay Healthy*

**Sites of Interest:**

Drumming as Worship: <https://www.reformedworship.org/article/december-2011/drumming-heartbeat-god>

Purchase Instruments: [www.musicmotion.com](http://www.musicmotion.com) [www.kindermusik.com](http://www.kindermusik.com)

Purchase Music: [www.choristersguild.org](http://www.choristersguild.org)

Check Out:

<https://www.choristersguild.org/store/cgbk70-all-hands-in-drumming-the-biblical-narrative/6012/>

<https://www.choristersguild.org/store/cgbk76-all-hands-in-volume-ii/8138/>

<https://www.musikgarten.org/gods-children-sing>

Music in the Bible: <https://www.openbible.info/topics/music>

Music in Reformed Tradition: <https://world.regent-college.edu/arts-theology/the-genius-of-luthers-and-calvins-musical-reformation>

Keep in mind any images you see on these sites are pre-pandemic. You certainly would social distance your participants.