

Build up: the power of singing



Founder and Executive Director of Fischy Music, Stephen Fischbacher MBE, celebrates the huge potential that singing has for children and young people's spiritual growth and personal wellbeing.



Picture it, you are lying in bed, but you can't sleep because tomorrow you are leading an Assembly in a primary school. Have you got the PowerPoint ready? Will the internet connection work for the songs you are going to be using? Will the children enjoy it? Will the sound system work? No pressure!

Some ministers, children's workers and teachers take all this in their stride and actually love the whole experience, others may have a slightly different reaction 'AARGH!!' It is big pressure no matter how confident you feel about being up front or singing even if you feel comfortable with leading songs, you also need to effectively lead songs in a large group in a meaningful and calm manner. You also want what you bring to engage the children and the staff in an academic – possibly secular – community, and leave them wanting more.

I believe that singing together in a group is one of the most powerful things we can do as human beings.

It is a deeply spiritual, emotional and social act that can unite communities and make connections with ourselves, other people and God in a way that talking can't do. I can't remember much of what was said to me in school and church when I was growing up, but I can remember the songs I sang. Singing has the power to engage our emotions and, if you are emotionally involved, change will happen. Even the non-confident singer can tap into this incredible tool and benefit from it even though they may not have a trained voice or play an instrument.

For the last 26 years, Fischy Music has been resourcing primary schools and churches across the UK with songs and musical materials for both Health & Wellbeing work and worship gatherings. We are very aware of the pressure that ministers, children's workers and teachers are under and the varying levels of confidence and skill levels in leading singing. So we have tried our very best to produce both songs and teaching resources that work in a wide variety of situations for a diverse range of musical abilities, and we have produced an online platform, Fischy Music Online (www.fischy.com/fischy-music-online) to share these songs.

Singing together is a way for everyone to contribute and engage with an idea. I believe that there are three key ingredients to any singing experience being one that children and teachers come away from feeling that something good has just happened:

- Did it feel safe? (respecting my feelings and beliefs)
- Did children feel that they belonged? (a sense of togetherness while we sing)
- Were children given an opportunity to express themselves? (my contribution matters, it's not just a performance)

I didn't mention getting everything right and all the equipment behaving itself or the children sitting nicely! If we take these three points seriously, children and adults will have a transformative experience that leads to emotional, social and spiritual growth.

We did some research into the long-term impact of Fischy Music songs on young adults who had sung Fischy songs in the past; based on feedback from 375 respondents, the following areas of their lives had been positively impacted up to 20 years after singing Fischy songs at school or church:

- Sense of belonging
- Confidence and self-worth
- Understanding and expressing of emotions
- Resilience in difficult times
- Nurturing their faith

'These songs have helped people to feel like they belong and can help individuals to feel good about the part they have to play in the world.' (Young adult)

'We ran holiday clubs through church and in my previous experience kids didn't like to sing, especially the boys! When we introduced Fischy everybody wanted to sing they ask for their favourite Fischy Music now. What a transformation!' (Church children's worker)

Even if you don't feel musically gifted, you can still be effective at enabling joyful and meaningful singing, by using good available resources and delegating the up-front duties to children and other teachers who are more comfortable and skilled in this role.

'The online website is excellent. You've clearly taken the time to find out what schools and churches really need and want. The suggestions for teachers are also extremely useful and save me a lot of preparation time.' (Teacher)

Singing together is a powerful way to build up individuals and communities, uniting us physically, spiritually and emotionally. In an assembly, music does a lot of the heavy lifting, both breaking the ice, and communicating important themes and giving children a memorable take-away. Tried and tested in 750 schools and countless churches, if you're not already familiar with Fischy Music, why not play one of their songs as you connect with your local school?



Discover Fischy Music at www.fischy.com
Listen to Melanie and Stephen as they discuss the power of music to engage issues like handling emotion, bullying and racism on the Roots for Churches podcast.
<https://rootsforchurches.podbean.com/>