Recorded Music for the Worship Service

A congregation without an organist can still enjoy music that supports its worship. With a smartphone, a suitable speaker, and a little preparation, recorded hymns and liturgy can be simple to use. Once everything is ready, operating the music during the service usually requires only Play, Pause, and Volume.

As the one conducting the service, you may choose to control the music yourself. You may find it easier, however, to recruit a capable church member to handle playback while you concentrate on leading worship.

What equipment do we need?

- A smartphone with the service's music saved on it.
- A Bluetooth speaker powerful enough for your worship space. A small speaker may serve a small church well; a larger room may require a larger speaker. Test it from the back of the church to make sure everyone can hear clearly.
- MP3 recordings of hymns and liturgical music, available from Professor Paul Naumann at paul.naumann@ilc.edu.
- A music-player or jukebox app that plays MP3 files saved on your phone and lets you arrange them in a playlist. Pi Music Player for Android is one example.

How should I prepare the music before Sunday?

Create a separate folder or playlist for the service, named something like "Sunday, October 11" or "Current Sunday." Include only the selections you will need, arranged in the exact order of worship. For example:

1. Prelude or preservice music, if desired.
2. Opening hymn.
3. Liturgy.
4. Pre-sermon hymn.
5. Offertory.
6. Post-sermon hymn.
7. Communion liturgy, when needed.
8. Triple Amen after the benediction, if used.
9. Closing hymn.

Adjust this list to match your congregation's order of service. If the liturgy consists of several recordings, place each selection where it belongs.

A playlist lets you arrange the music without changing your original MP3 files. If you prefer a folder, numbering the filenames can help keep them in order: **01 Opening Hymn**, **02 Liturgy**, and so on. Confirm that your app displays them in that order.

Turn off Shuffle and Repeat. Also check what happens when a recording ends. If the app automatically plays the next track, disable that feature if possible. Otherwise, the operator must be ready to pause before the next selection begins. Test this before worship.

How do I connect and position the speaker?

1. Turn on the Bluetooth speaker.
2. On your phone, open Settings → Bluetooth and select the speaker.
3. Play a few seconds of a hymn to confirm that the sound comes through the speaker.
4. Place the speaker where the congregation can hear it clearly, keeping the phone within reliable Bluetooth range.
5. Set the volume high enough to support congregational singing without overpowering it.

Check that both the phone and speaker are fully charged. Keep chargers nearby if practical.

How can I prevent calls or notifications from interrupting worship?

Before the service:

- Enable Do Not Disturb and check for any exceptions that still allow calls or notifications.
- Turn off any alarms scheduled during worship.
- Keep media volume on so the recordings remain audible.
- Open the Sunday folder or playlist and leave the first selection ready.

Do not assume that silencing the ringer also silences alarms or every notification. Check your phone's settings and test them beforehand.

What do I do during the service?

Have the order of service beside you so you can follow along.

- When a selection is needed, confirm the correct track and tap Play.
- When it ends, stop or pause playback as needed to prevent the next track from starting.
- Select the next item and leave it paused, ready for its place in the service.
- Adjust the volume only when necessary.

If another member operates the music, agree beforehand on the cues for starting each selection. A brief practice together can make Sunday morning much smoother.

The goal is simple: during worship, you should normally need only Play, Pause, and Volume.

Can we play hymns directly from a website?

Recorded hymns may also be played from the TLH 1941 hymn website on a phone connected to the speaker.

For regular use, however, keeping the MP3 files on the phone is usually more dependable because playback does not require an Internet connection. Whichever method you choose, test it in the church before Sunday.

What should I check on Saturday?

A short rehearsal can prevent most difficulties:

- Connect the phone and speaker.
- Open the Sunday folder or playlist and verify the order.
- Play part of every selection to confirm that it is the correct hymn or liturgical recording.
- Check that the hymn recording matches the verses planned for the service.
- Confirm that Shuffle and Repeat are off.
- Practice stopping after a selection so the next one does not begin unexpectedly.
- Check the volume from several places in the church.
- Verify that calls, notifications, and alarms will not interrupt playback.
- Charge both devices and leave the first selection ready.

The setup may feel unfamiliar at first, but it soon becomes routine. A little preparation allows the music to serve its purpose: supporting the congregation as it sings God’s praise and hears his Word.