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What Is Contemporary Worship?

At First Church, the newly arrived pastor faced a question over whether to continue holding its evening service, which utilizes a rock band, praise songs, and emphasizes casual dress. To foster discussion, the pastor held a class for church leaders titled, "Worship: Changing to Reach a New Generation." In class, a woman who attends the more traditional morning service raised her hand. "Pastor, I keep hearing people talk about contemporary worship. What exactly does that mean?"

Defining Features of Contemporary Worship
Contemporary worship has its detractors and defenders. But what is it exactly? Swee Hong Lim and Lester Ruth have written a history of the phenomenon, which emerged among independent and Pentecostal churches in the 1970s and 1980s and was later labeled "contemporary worship" when it was adopted by Mainline Protestant churches after the mid-1990s. They identify at least four qualities that distinguish

this style of worship.1
To explore these features, imagine stumbling upon

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