

Consumers or producers

By [Diane Roth](#)

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My husband, a musician, likes to talk about different ways people love music. Most people love music of some sort or another, but they love it mostly as consumers. In other words, they are listeners. They turn on a radio, or pop in a CD or love sorting the tunes on their ipods by genre, or creating a nice "mix" of music to listen to.

There's another way to love music, though, and that is as someone who makes music. You can write songs, or you can play music, but in either case you are choosing not just to consume but to produce. You can use your voice or piano keys or a rhythm instrument, you can play a flute or a kazoo, you can be a professional or a rank amateur, but if you play, you are producing something rather than just consuming it.

Both consuming and producing are normal activities. We do both of them in our lives, although it seems to me that we are beginning to skew more and more toward the consuming side. If you buy, cook and eat your supper, you're both a producer and a consumer -- producing a nice meal and then eating it. If you put something in the microwave or go out to eat (and we do this more often than I care to admit) you're just a consumer.

My mom sewed a lot of our clothes. Now I mostly go shopping, reserving my limited sewing skills and patience for hems and mending. I do find a strange attraction to knitting, partly because, I think, I can produce something for someone else (or me!) to wear. We used to get most of our books out of the public library, reading the book being the most important thing at the time. I wrote reams and reams of short stories and poems and one acts plays on lined notebook paper. A friend and I would read our work to one another. Now for some reason it seems important to own the book, whether I get around to actually reading it or not.

Then I turn to worship. It seems to me that the idea has developed that the clergy and other professionals are the producers of worship, and that the congregation are consumers of worship. Some people critique congregation members for this, but I think that clergy and other worship leaders can be as much to blame. If it is true that we are all worshipping, with our voices, with our hearts, with our lips, we are all producers of worship, and we're all consumers as well. If we "get a lot out of worship," it may be just because we put our hearts, souls and minds into worship.

It's true that we consume the Word which is given to us, something we did not produce ourselves. But as we chew and swallow and ponder what we freely receive, we do go out to produce, to create, to produce fruit, to create community, to do justice and to love kindness. We are not simply collectors or appreciators of fine Bible verses, putting them in order by genre.

Rank amateurs we may be, but somehow we start playing those verses with ours lives, producing melodies and harmonies based on "Love one another as I have loved you," or "The Lord is my shepherd", or "The Lord has risen."

On Sundays the bread is broken, the songs are sung, the word comes into our ears, into our hearts. We take and eat. We go and live.

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