

Bass bias?

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When my congregation intones the Lord's Prayer, everyone seems to use a cellar voice. We sound like a bass section, women and children included.

On a recent Sunday I dropped out and listened. I thought the deep, resonant sound was pretty neat--until I mentioned it on Facebook. I was hoping to hear from friends in other congregations, to learn whether this is true elsewhere. But I mostly heard from people from my own church-- all women who were not too happy about the bass droning.

One woman said her voice is naturally low, so she makes an effort to speak higher. Another said she tries to speak with a natural pitch, rather than going down to the basement.

The response that struck me the most was from a mother of young children. She said her children know the Lord's Prayer, but they're intimidated by the bass sound, so they don't even participate!

Now it's a problem if children don't want to participate and if women, with treble voices, are ambivalent about it. But what to do about it? I suppose a congregation could be trained to speak in higher tones. And on unison responses other than the Lord's Prayer, reading antiphonally helps, alternating between women's and men's voices.

One Facebook respondent suggested singing the Lord's Prayer. His Episcopal congregation uses a contemporary three-part [setting](#) by Marilyn Haskel that is rather slow and meditative. He said he's come to like it.

My voice is naturally low, but in the future I'll try to pitch it up a bit in congregational recitations and readings.

Do low voices dominate in your congregation? Any thoughts about how to make corporate readings and responses more genuinely inclusive of higher voices, so they're not drowned out by voices like mine?