

## OVERVIEW

This guideline focuses on the hymn-singing session prior to worship services. Hymn singing is a time for the congregation to meditate upon God's love, grace, and mercy through the singing of hymns. The roles of the hymn leader are to guide the congregation in singing praises to the Lord and to prepare the hearts of the congregation for the reverent mood of the worship services. Music is a divine gift from God, so we should use this wonderful gift to edify men and to glorify His name. Apostle Paul exhorts the believers to "*admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in our hearts to the Lord*" (Col 3:16). Also, when King Hezekiah recovered from his sickness, he proclaimed that "*the Lord was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the Lord*" (Is 38:20).

A common misconception among members is that the hymn-singing session is a form of "pre-worship" that comes before the actual worship session. This misconception undermines the true value of hymn singing. Thus, it is important for a hymn leader to understand and capture the essence of this holy work. In other words, a hymn leader should be able to inspire the congregation to passionately sing praises to God from the heart. Hymn leaders should not carry themselves in a laid-back, unfocused manner in front of the congregation. Instead, they should rely on the Holy Spirit to instill praiseworthy enthusiasm in the congregation. To accomplish this, they need to be prepared in many aspects. They need to be enthusiastic while they are singing. They should also use active measures to lead and encourage the members to sing with their hearts.

## OBJECTIVES

- Lead and encourage the congregation to sing praises and glorify the Lord.
- Prepare the congregation for worship services.
- Emphasize that the hymn-singing session is an integral part of worship, rather than a form of pre-worship.

## HOW TO

### PREPARATION BEFOREHAND

- Pray for the guidance and abidance of the Lord.
- Select hymns:
  - Do not simply pick some favorite hymns a few minutes beforehand.
  - Choose hymns related to the sermon topic, if possible.
  - 1-3 hymns for a 5-minute hymn-singing session.
  - 3-5 hymns for a 10-minute hymn-singing session.
  - Prepare back-up hymns for unexpected circumstances.

- Find out who the sermon speaker is and ask him/her for the topic/outline and suggested hymns. Include some hymns & praises that relate to the sermon theme.
- Consult the Chinese and English hymnals and take note of the following for each hymn:
  - Number of verses – if the number of verses differ, decide how many verses to sing.
  - Tempo – decide on the speed of the hymn.
  - Fermata – look for the “pause” signs and decide how long to hold them.
  - Beat pattern – refer to **Exhibit A**; practice the beat pattern if you are not familiar with it
  - Any differences between the English and Chinese hymn books in the music.
- Inform accompanist of all songs and coordinate any necessary details (style, mood, tempo, repeats, endings.)
- If possible, rehearse the hymn's mood, tempo, and duration of fermatas with the accompanist beforehand.
- If necessary, prepare a reflection or background information on songs to further edify the audience.
  - Duration of the sharing may vary (not every song needs to be preceded/followed by sharing; most sharing can be as short as a few sentences; a longer one may include a story/background/personal reflection once in a while)
  - It is important that what you say is presented as a reflection or background information or other details may seem extraneous or preachy.

## PREPARATION ON THE HOUR

- As hymn leaders are visible to the congregation, dress appropriately, and groom yourself accordingly as one serving God and representing the church.
  - Neat appearance – hair combed, facial hair neatly shaved/trimmed, shirt tucked-in, and so on
  - Appropriate attire for brothers – dress shirts, ties, slacks, dress shoes (avoid t-shirts, jeans, shorts, sneakers, sandals)
  - Appropriate attire for sisters – dress shirts, skirts, dress shoes (avoid excessive jewelry, jeans, shorts, sneakers, sandals)
- Arrive at least 15 minutes before the hymn-singing session in order to pray and prepare your heart.
  - This is crucial because it sets the tone.
  - If you arrive too close to the scheduled time, you may seem rushed and unprepared, which the congregation can sense.
- Write all the hymn numbers on the board or projector (or inform the audio-visual personnel).

## WHILE HYMN LEADING

- Remember to maintain a solemn and professional, yet welcoming disposition.
- Remember to lead the congregation with enthusiasm.
- Actively lead and encourage the members to sing with their hearts.
  - Explain what is in the hymn.

- o Share a short testimony.
- o Link the hymn to the service theme.
- o Exound on the verse on which the hymn is based.

## PROCEDURE

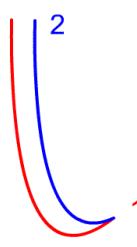
- 1) Silent prayer. In some situations, this may be optional. For example, if the hymn-singing session begins immediately after a prayer has just concluded.
- 2) "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we begin our hymn-singing session."
- 3) "Please sing hymn no. \_\_\_\_"
  - a. Introduce the hymn or quote relevant Bible verse
  - b. Mention the verses to be sung
  - c. Cue the accompanist on the tempo before each hymn
  - d. Say the number of the next verse prior to singing it (helpful for people coming in late)
- 4) Make eye contact with the sermon speaker near the end of the hymn to confirm that the speaker is ready to deliver the sermon; if not, continue with another hymn.
- 5) "This concludes the hymn-singing session."
- 6) Silent prayer. In some situations, this may be optional. For example, if a sermon will begin with a silent prayer immediately after the hymn-singing session.
- 7) Erase the hymn numbers written on the board if applicable.

## ADDITIONAL POINTERS

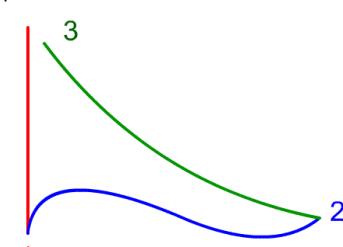
- Be prepared to translate each phrase if the congregation is multilingual.
- Choose simple beat patterns (2/4, 3/4, 4/4 beats) during your first few times leading hymns.
  - o Practice in front of a mirror until you are familiar with the pattern.
  - o During the hymn-singing session, don't be too concerned with conducting; just make sure to lead the congregation through your own singing.
  - o Pay attention to proper conducting for future hymn leading.
- Don't be timid; be assertive in leading the congregation to praise God.
- Don't be stiff; relax and move your arms naturally along with the music.
- Hymn leaders may invite the congregation to sit in the front if they notice that members tend to sit in the back.

## **Exhibit A** Conducting Techniques For Common Beat Patterns

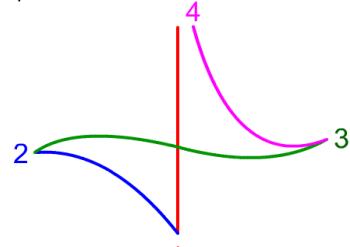
Two-point variation 1



Three-point variation 1



Four-point variation 1



Source: <http://library.thinkquest.org/~27153/low/conducting>

## **ONLINE ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES**

- Enable video camera when joining the Zoom meeting. Your video will only be broadcast during hymn singing.
- Try to remain centered to the camera during hymn singing.
- Do not mute your audio while singing (unless the pianist is on a different device).
- Adjust Zoom audio settings, and enable “Preserve Original Sound.”