

APPROPRIATE MUSIC IN SACRAMENT MEETINGS

Appropriate music in sacrament meetings will enhance the spirit of reverent worship. “The bishopric selects topics for talks and music in sacrament meetings. Talks and music should focus on gospel subjects that ward members most need to build faith and testimony. . . . All talks and music should be in harmony with the sacred nature of the sacrament. . . . Music and musical texts are to be sacred, dignified, and otherwise suitable for sacrament meeting.” (Church Handbook of Instructions, 2006, pages 64-65).

“Music in Church meetings should help members worship, feel the sacred spirit of the Sabbath, and feel the spirit of revelation. This music should not draw attention to itself or be for demonstration. Some religiously oriented music in a popular style is not appropriate for sacrament meetings. Also, much sacred music that is suitable for concerts and recitals is not appropriate for a Latter-day Saint worship service.” (CHI - Music, 1998, page 289).

Sacred music should include the basic elements of a prayer (see D&C 25:12), containing a devotional quality and a reverential mood. Sacred music which does not meet guidelines will generally not support a meaningful worship experience.

Music in sacrament meetings is inspirational and edifying when it conforms to a delicate balance of basic ingredients of worshipful music. Simple melodies, agreeable harmonies, and subdued rhythmic patterns will generally result in the most desirable kind of music for worship. Music in a popular style, generally characterized by catchy melodies, modern harmonies, and prominent rhythms, will oftentimes not enhance the spirit of reverent worship.

Organ Prelude and Postlude Music

“The prelude is a call to worship, an invitation to approach our Father in Heaven and to commune with Him through the Holy Spirit. The prelude should create an atmosphere in which communication with the Lord can readily take place, clearing the mind of worldly thoughts and inviting spiritual contemplation. It aids worship and is a background for quiet meditation.” (Guidebook for Organists, 1969, page 6).

“Quiet prelude and postlude music creates an atmosphere of worship that invites the Spirit into Church meetings. The organist or pianist usually plays hymns or other appropriate music for five to ten minutes before and after a meeting. Playing hymns helps members review gospel teachings in their minds.” (Church Handbook of Instructions - Music, 1998, page 289).

“An organist who has the sensitivity to quietly play prelude music from the hymnbook tempers our feelings and causes us to go over in our minds the lyrics which teach the peaceable things of the kingdom.” (President Boyd K. Packer, October 1991 General Conference).

By playing hymns, we will “draw ever closer to Him who has inspired sacred music and commanded that it be used to worship Him. . . . We should use hymns when we need spiritual strength and inspiration.” (Elder Dallin H. Oaks, October 1994 General Conference).

“Generally speaking, our musicians play prelude music that is really secular or is Protestant. It is marvelous what will happen if they play the familiar hymns. . . . Powerful music and the Spirit will be invited into a meeting by the hymns of the Restoration.” (President Boyd K. Packer, General Authority Training Meeting, 3 April 1993).

Congregational Singing

“The hymns of the Church are the basic music for Latter-day Saint meetings and are standard for all congregational singing. . . . Opening and closing hymns in sacrament meetings are *usually* sung by the congregation. The sacrament hymn is *always* sung by the congregation” (Church Handbook of Instructions, pages 289-90). The First Presidency encourages “all members, whether musically inclined or not, to join with us in singing the hymns” (Preface, *Hymns*, 1985).

Although most musical selections for sacrament services should come from the Church-published *Hymns*, the *Children’s Songbook*, or *The Choirbook*, other appropriate music that is in keeping with the spirit of the hymns may occasionally be used (see CHI, pages 289, 291).

Ward Choir Music

“Choirs are encouraged to use the hymnbook as their basic resource because the hymns teach the truths of the restored gospel. Hymn arrangements and other appropriate choral works may also be used.” (Church Handbook of Instructions, page 291).

“The ward choir should sing in sacrament meeting at least once or twice a month” (ibid, 291). “Ideally, you would have a choir in your unit, with an invitation to sing periodically” (Elder Russell M. Nelson, Worldwide Leadership Meeting, 21 June 2003).

Special Musical Selections

“Hymns are . . . encouraged for prelude and postlude music, choir music, and special selections. If other musical selections are used, they should be in keeping with the spirit of the hymns of the Church. Texts should be doctrinally correct.” (Church Handbook of Instructions, page 289).

“Special musical selections or a congregational hymn may be scheduled following the sacrament or between the speakers” (Church Handbook of Instructions, page 290).

Deviations and Improper Innovations in Sacrament Meetings

1. It is improper for congregations to sing hymns following the benediction.
2. Choir preludes are generally inappropriate because a feeling of reverence may be lost when choir members leave the choir seats and return to the congregation before the meeting starts.
3. The choir should not be accompanied by a sizable group of musicians, like an ensemble, in addition to the organ or piano.
4. Members should not sing a hymn in conjunction with, or in place of bearing their testimonies.