

**Our Purpose as Organists**

“Inspirational music is an essential part of our church meetings. The hymns (1) invite the Spirit of the Lord, (2) create a feeling of reverence, (3) unify us as members, and (4) provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord (The First Presidency, *Hymns*, 1985, p. ix).

The following are important principles and skills, which will enable organists to accomplish the things mentioned in the above statement.

- I. “Invite the Spirit of the Lord” - Opening Hymn: #216, “We Are Sowing”
  - A. Hymn Introduction
    1. Reflects the spirit of the hymn
    2. Introduces tune, tempo, mood, style, and volume of first verse
  - B. Match Hymns to a Topic (“When feasible, the bishop and his counselors choose meeting topics well in advance.” –*Handbook*)
    1. Allows planning of hymns for advance preparation and practice
    2. Reinforces the topic for the meeting
    3. Allows time for bishopric to approve musical selections in advance
  
- II. “Create a Feeling of Reverence” - Sacrament Hymn: #184, “Upon the Cross of Calvary”
  - A. Registration – “Get enough organ on!”
    1. Flute chorus and modified flute chorus for reverent hymns
    2. Principal chorus and beyond for jubilant hymns
  - B. Extending Sacrament Hymns
    1. Play entire hymn as the hymn introduction (preparation of sacrament begins with the first chord of the introduction)
    2. Play an interlude between two of the verses
    3. Quietly play the hymn following the singing
  
- III. “Unify Us As Members” - Intermediate Hymn: #66, “Rejoice, the Lord Is King!”
  - A. Hymn Tempos
    1. Consult metronomic markings for tempo suggestions
    2. Fast enough to sing a phrase; slow enough to be devotionally powerful
    3. “We depend on our [music directors] and organists to lead us at the prescribed pace. Too slow or too fast can detract from a worshipful mood” (“Worship through Music,” Elder Dallin H. Oaks, Nov. 1994).
    4. Rehearse with the music director in advance
  - B. Hymn Interludes
    1. Provide a short rest for the singers, a second wind

2. Provide a bridge before the last verse to spur the singers on!
  3. Should be related in concept to the hymn itself
- C. Breathe for Singers
1. "Complete lift" (rhythmically release all fingers and the feet)
    1. At end of the hymn introduction
    2. Between verses
    3. At the end of sentences in the text
  2. "Partial lift" (release alto and soprano voices; sustain bass and tenor)
    1. At selected commas and semicolons as the text dictates
  3. "Carry over" (sustain voice lines between phrases)
    1. Where the text dictates
- D. Interpret the Text of the Hymn as You Play
1. Using "breathing" techniques above
  2. Altering registration for differing moods
- IV. "Provide a Way for Us to Offer Praises to the Lord" – Closing Hymn: #304, "Teach Me to Walk in the Light"
- A. Hymn Codas
1. Occasionally, short codas (such as in hymn #300, "Families Can Be Together Forever") can heighten feelings of reverence or praise.
- B. Additional Verses
1. "...do not routinely shorten a hymn by singing just the first one or two verses. Singing the verses printed below the music is encouraged" (*Hymns*, 1985, pg. 381).
- C. Familiar Favorites vs. Lesser Known Hymns
1. "Try to achieve a good balance between familiar favorites and less well-known hymns" (*Hymns*, 1985, pg. 381).
  2. Choosing hymns according to a topic helps less well-known hymns have more purpose and meaning.
  3. "If the hymn is unfamiliar, playing it completely through as an introduction can help the congregation feel more comfortable with it" (*Hymns*, 1985).

"[Organists] should remember that music in our worship services is not for demonstration but for worship. [Music] should be chosen to facilitate worship, not to provide performance opportunities for artists, no matter how accomplished" (Elder Oaks).

"Rejoice, the Lord Is King!" – arr. Carson, [www.WardOrganist.com](http://www.WardOrganist.com). "Teach Me to Walk in the Light" – Introduction from *Choosing the Right*, Vol. 1, Beebe, pub. Larice; verse two accompaniment (transposed) from *Hymn Preludes for Organ*, Bk. 4, Manookin, pub. Sonos.