

Workshop

Beginning Congregational Conducting

Presenter

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Direction of Congregational Singing

The director, or chorister, as we commonly call him, who leads the congregation in song, is an innovation which is peculiar almost to our church alone. There is a stabilizing factor in the chorister-led congregational singing, especially so where the chorister is efficient. The *Church Chorister's Manual*, which has been used as a text for our choristers' classes throughout the church, has in it this helpful paragraph:

“Since congregations are rarely rehearsed it is evident that a conductor must be satisfied with the way in which he can induce the members to sing by sheer magnetism and carefully timed beats, and should school himself to be insensitive to everything else which he sees to be faulty. No procedures on the part of the conductor, such as abruptly stopping the congregation for explanations or reprimands, stamping the feet, pounding the stand, can be justified in congregational singing. The general spirit of worship should never be disrupted during the progress of a service. Congregational singing should preserve and enhance this spirit.

Suggestions for Choristers:

1. Direct, if possible, without a book in your hand.
2. Let your movements be in harmony with the spirit and mood of the hymn. Do not distract the attention of the congregation from the hymn and center it on yourself. The hymn should be the center of attention.
3. The proper timing of your preliminary beat is all-important if you would have singers begin well. Make all beats anticipate what follows. It is not so much a matter of beating time for a congregation as it is a matter of timing your beats to keep the congregation well together.
4. Be at the chapel sufficiently early to allow time for all preparations.
5. Your main task is to instill the love of hymn-singing in the members of the church.

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