

TOWARDS ACHIEVING SPIRIT- FILLED CHOIR MINISTRY IN CHURCH

Presentation By
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PRESENTATION OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the topic is to ensure that each executive member understand:

1. Purpose & Management of Music Ministry in Contemporary Church
2. Basic Physical & Spiritual Requirement for Choristers in Church Music Ministry
3. Typical Problem Issues in Church Music Ministry & Probably Solutions

Meaning, position and purpose of church choir

Since the beginning of worship, whether in Christendom or Judaism, the singing ministry is very important to scriptural assignment. The aura of God is always moving with the divine worship of the Most High God.

For today, let us consider the meaning, position and purpose of Church Choir.

The word '**Choir**' has several definitions. In general sense, it is simply **a group or company of persons trained to sing together**. It may be sacred or secular; mixed or made up of males or females alone. It could also be junior or adult choir.

Architecturally, a choir is that part of a church building appropriated or set aside for singers – **chancel**. Ecclesiastically, a choir is a group or company of Christian singers representing the **Angelic Choir**.

The concern of this paper is Christian Singers. One who sings in the choir is a chorister is a group of musicians trained to sing together.

Nehemiah: 12:31 & 40. Appointed Thanks – Giving Choir:

Two Thanksgiving Choirs stood at the house of God:

David was a Royal Harpist: 1Samuel 16, 14-23:

And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. Let our lord now command thy servants, which are before thee, to seek out a man, who is a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well.

And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring him to me. Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the Lord is with him. Wherefore Saul sent messengers unto Jesse, and said, Send me David thy son, which is with the sheep.” 1 Samuel 16:15-19 KJV

Early church musicians were usually both instrumentalists and singers.

“Music played an awesome role in the life of the [early biblical] society and in worship, as it still does in ours.”

- a. What is the role of music in congregational worship?
- b. What is the role of music in contemporary society?

When David organized temple music with official choirs of singers and instrumentalists, he knew the power that music played in worship.”

- a. Does music have power in worship our church?
- b. Does music have power in our congregation’s worship?

The Roles of Choir in the Church

Choristers are ministers of the gospel through songs. Choristers are the Levites of today, meant to perform sacred duties in the house of God (Numbers 3:6-12). Levites were members of a priestly tribe associated with the priesthood – they sang in the holy sanctuary and played different musical instruments. Numbers 3: 12b reads ‘...

Therefore, the Levites shall be mine’. Choristers are specially called by God to show forth His praise in no small measure. A true Levite of today is not a pretender, but a true child of God. Christ is the Head of the Church. The Church is the Body of Christ, while the Choir is (in this

context) the NECK – linking the BODY to God. The Choir ministers directly to God, while the Preacher ministers to the congregation.

The duties of present day Levites (**choristers, instrumental musicians**) are sacred.

A great Choir must have a Leader:

1 Chronicle 15;22: Chenaniah, leader of the Levites was instructor in charge of the music, because he was skillful.

- **Perform any Levitical Service:** I doubt if there is any Church today or a Church Service without singers and/or instrumentalists. Their work is to perform during praise/worship, chorus sessions and whenever they are called to do so. Where there is a lively worship, the presence of God is automatically brought down.
- **Gatekeeper:** The gates of heaven are always open whenever there is praise, for God inhabits the praise of His people. God always descends with open heavens in order to bless His Church.
- **Assist Worshippers:** Wherever there is music, worshippers are in a high spirit to worship God. Therefore, instrumentalists and singers assist worshippers in worshipping God.
- **Lead People in Prayer:** He who sings prays twice. Music aids and leads people in prayer. The wordings of some songs are prayers in themselves. See Example:
- **Instruct People in the Law:** Singers instruct or preach through their songs. Some go to Church because of musical instruments, and from there, they are drawn to God.
- **Keep the Store:** Praise unlocks the store house of God. Singers/instrumentalists can lead you to the store. Our job is to choose what you want. The sure key to unlock the store house of God is praise.
- **Care of the Sanctuary:** Praise brings down the presence and Spirit of God. The presence of God expels all contrary spirits, thereby sanitising the sanctuary.

The duties of present day Levites are sacred; they are separated unto God. To restore the lost glory, true Levites today should be ones devoid of worldly sentiments, selfishness, discrimination and moral hazards – call it repugnant and recalcitrant (negative) attitude to duty. They should be born again,

controlled, governed and permeated by God's love, where the Spirit of God pleases to dwell.

Why Is Choir Vital To The Church?

Among the many reasons the choir is vital to the life of any church, these three stood out:

1. The choir is an **opportunity** for involvement. A church's ministry is only as effective as the people in its congregation who choose to get involved. Small groups, outreach teams, and the arts have provided great opportunities for congregants to sow into the life of their church's ministry, and the choir falls under all three of those categories. I've often heard the choir referred to as "the church within the church." When you join a choir, you're not just singing notes together; you're doing life and ministry together.
2. The choir is an **extension** of the pulpit. There are so many fantastic songs that have been written for the Church and many that have yet to be written. But not all songs are necessarily suitable for *corporate* worship. There are songs **that teach, encourage, compel, and call to action**, and the choir is a marvelous mouthpiece for such things. By presenting these kinds of songs, the choir takes on a pastoral role, and it brings a rich dynamic to the theme or message of that particular service. This is especially effective in services with a missional focus or special services like those during Holy Week or the Christmas season.
3. The choir is a **reflection** of heaven. The prophet Isaiah gives us a glimpse into God's throne room with angels singing together, "Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). **John paints a similar picture in the book of Revelation. There is a heavenly choir that sings God's praises for all eternity.** When we see our friends and family in the choir loft singing in harmony of voice and spirit, I believe we are momentarily transported (even if only in our minds) to the throne room of heaven. Furthermore, we often see a wide array of ages, and cultural backgrounds on display in the choir. This, too, is a reflection of heaven – God's people, of every age and every race, worshipping together as one body.

We must not discount the richness the choir brings to the church's worship experience. I think many would be surprised by the long-lasting effect a choir program can have on the church.

Others are:

1. Choirs are biblical.

It's easy to miss, but the Book of Psalms is filled with detailed notes to the music director explaining the style, the melody, and the occasion of a particular song. Old Testament worship was led by great numbers of trained singers and musicians. And the Psalms were the hymnal of the New Testament church. This is not to say that choirs are the only valid scriptural model for worship, but to dismiss choirs altogether as archaic and irrelevant means we risk forsaking a rich biblical tradition.

2. Choirs encourage excellence in worship.

A choir rarely performs “off the cuff.” Rather, the director spends time and resources finding the perfect arrangement of the perfect song. Then, the director spends time rehearsing singers and musicians to perform the song with beauty and precision. Choir members learn the parts and hopefully transcend the notes on the page—allowing the song to speak to and through them to the congregation. Ideally, a “performance” piece inspires people to praise. Likewise, using the choir for congregational songs is a powerful prompt to worship: people clearly hear the melody and join their voices as one. A practiced choir encourages a sense of awe and reverence through their excellence and preparation.

3. Choirs celebrate the human voice.

There is something extraordinary about hearing a group of practiced singers use their God-given instruments to worship their Creator. I remember the first time I ever heard a gospel mass choir. T

4. Choirs can inspire and lead worship.

One of the arguments against using choirs in contemporary worship services is that it relegates congregants to the role of bystanders. As if we're saying, “Let the professionals do the worshiping—you just sit here and enjoy it.” Instead—the argument continues—we ought to make congregational singing as simple and inviting as possible. So we do away with hymnals that have

written harmony parts and simply project lyrics on the screen to be sung in unison. But this great “dumbing down” doesn’t necessarily encourage more participation. You don’t have to look far to find modern worship settings where people are “spectating” just as much as they might have done with a choir.

A properly used, a choir (or worship band) can lead your congregation to worship in Spirit and in truth.

5. Choirs can be redemptive communities.

We live in the age of the superstar worship leader and celebrity pastor. Choirs can be an antidote to this spiritual epidemic. A healthy choir affirms *all its members*—not just the high-profile ones. A choir can be a redemptive community where all the imperfect parts of the Body of Christ are cherished—especially when someone is going through a tough time. A choir is a place where you belong, where you are missed when you’re not there, and where you can contribute your modest talent so that the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts.

Effective directors treat their choirs as “a ministry within a ministry.” They take time to share devotional thoughts, prayer requests, and pot-luck dinners. Like the fabled bar in the TV show *Cheers*, their choir is a place “where everyone knows your name.” This is especially important in larger churches, where it’s easy to remain anonymous, or worse, overlooked.

6. Choirs make us work together.

Similarly, the American archetype is that of uncompromised individualism. We resist being woven into the fabric of a community—especially one where we must constantly subjugate ourselves to a leader and submit our talents to one another.

Choirs can help cure the disease of self-centeredness. To succeed, we *must* yield ourselves to one another. We must listen to each other. We must follow the leader’s direction. Looking away for even a moment can be embarrassing. Straying from the notes can be disastrous. Choirs teach us mutuality and submission within the context of an endeavor greater than ourselves.

7. Choirs can encourage musical diversity.

Most “choir folks” are more musically diverse than you’d think. They appreciate lots of different styles of music because—somewhere along the way—they had a choir director who made them sing in different languages.

Before we close...

The top 3 issues facing church music ministry:

1. Lack of resources
2. Lack of time
3. Lack of commitment

I will unpack a little of the above here and also summarise some of the other issues

The lowdown: what are we struggling with in our worship teams right now?

- Lack of resources – the overwhelming number one issue
 - Simply not having enough musicians or sound people to populate the choir
 - Missing drummers, bass players, keys players and even worship leaders
 - Conflicting demands for musicians who are also involved in other ministries
 - Turnover of musicians when younger people leave for university
 - In places a lack of musicians with any genuine talent
- Time
 - To practice
 - To pray
 - To research and teach new songs
 - A general culture of busyness and conflicting demands
- Commitment
 - To developing excellence
 - To being willing to work and serve
 - To practice
 - To turn up on time
 - To focus on improvement
- Pastoral and leadership issues
 - Myriad issues with “problem” musicians – mainly to do with attitude or “unconscious incompetence”
 - Having a balance between musical excellence and encouraging musicians
 - Communication from the worship leader to the band

- Congregation issues
 - Lack of support
 - Criticism
 - Members who view worship as exclusively music and as entertainment
- Church leadership issues
 - Insisting on screening and testing before new people can get involved (which can take a long period)
- Musicianship
 - Everyone doing their own thing rather than working as a team
 - Musicians that do not make room for each other – they play all the notes, all the time
 - Inconsistent ability and little willingness to improve
 - Lack of confidence
- Sound team
 - Lack of resources – human and technical
 - Lack of skills
 - Unwillingness to train
 - Understanding what sound the musicians want to make
- Admin challenges
 - Managing different keys for different singers
 - Learning and integrating new material
 - Not always playing what is practiced
 - The challenge of working in multi-church sites
- The songs
 - Scaling songs down from “the full Hill-song” arrangement
 - A limited song repertoire that does not reflect real-life struggles and disappointments or the disconnect between our theology and what we experience day-to-day

Finally:

As we chart a new course of action for our Choir, May God guide the leadership right. May He give the followership a spirit to serve. May He meet us at our different points of need.

I have worshiped in churches. I have consulted for churches. I have also supported friends to set up churches. I have not seen a choir member who served whole-heartedly and was not successful in his or her private endeavors. Let us trust the God we serve.

Thank you and God bless.