



# Church Music Help Sheets

## “CD” Series – for Choir Directors Choir Practice: Beginnings **CD3**

*This sheet is one of two intended for directors of church choirs to help them manage practices effectively.*

In CD 2 we stressed the importance of being ready to start choir practice on time. If you wait for all members to be present, they will come to count on a late start and the number of latecomers will increase. A late beginning is not a good beginning.

There are three good ways of beginning your choir practice: prayer, warm-ups and hymn practice. One, two or all three of them would make a good start.

**Prayer.** Anything we do will be better done if we call on God to guide the task.

Free prayer is fine if you can trust the prayer leader to make the prayer relevant to what you are about to do and to keep it reasonably short.

Some choirs use the RSCM Choristers’ Prayer, which reads: “Bless, O Lord, us your servants, who minister in your temple. Grant that what we sing with our lips we may believe in our hearts and what we believe in our hearts we may show forth in our lives. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.”

Other suitable prayers may be found by looking through prayer books and other prayer anthologies. A prayer does not have to mention music to be relevant to choir practice; prayers under such headings as “leadership”, “service”, “worship”, “talents” and “vestry prayers” may also be useful, perhaps with minor changes.

Many of the hymns in your hymn book are in fact prayers. If there is a subject index, use it to find suitable material. One or two verses would be all you would need.

We know of one choir which has put together its own prayer book, all the prayers except the RSCM prayer having been written by the choir members themselves. With updates from time to time to involve new members, there are now 48 short prayers in the book. Few of them are poetic, but all of them are sincere.

**Warm-ups.** Warm-up exercises are intended to get the voice in working order for singing, i.e. to encourage deep breathing using the diaphragm and clear the vocal cords of rubbish. They are not to be confused with more strenuous vocal exercises designed to extend the range of the voice or exercises on vocal technique such as agility. These should not be used until the voice is “warm”.

**Hymn Practice.** Your choir’s most important contribution to worship is in the hymns they lead. If you do not already get the hymn list before choir practice each week, have a word with your Minister

or Priest about it. A confident lead from the choir makes a lot of difference to the congregation.

Hymn practice is therefore something that we should place at or near the beginning of choir practice because of the importance of hymns in worship. Note also, however, that most hymns lie in the middle of the vocal range, require good diction and, frequently, good breath control. Can they be used as warm-ups?

Copies of any of these Help Sheets may be obtained from the Secretary of RSCM Australia, ACT Branch:  
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