

Ideas for Song Services

Sometimes musicians may be looking for ideas to give structure to song services. This document contains suggestions and ideas.

Know Your Hymnal!

Song marathon (sing through the whole book over the course of one year)

- Organize an event once a month, and start going through the hymnal in numerical order, approximately 50 songs per evening (50x12=600).
- It takes several hours to sing 50 songs, perhaps 3–4 hours. You could plan to sing a certain number of verses, e.g. 3, per song if you wish to save time. There could be other activities in the building, such as coffee and refreshments or fundraising activities so people could take breaks from singing and then come back. The songs and singing could keep progressing, even if people come and go.
- The singing could be broadcast to the dining room so people there can still enjoy the songs and learn by listening.
- Each monthly singing marathon event could be assigned to and organized by a different group, e.g. haps or a home services group. The groups could plan the refreshments and other activities for the same evening. The whole congregation would be welcome to all of the monthly events.
- For several hours of singing, it is a good idea to assign 3 or 4 song leaders and organists so they can take breaks. Furthermore, the songs for the evening could be preassigned to the musicians so they can familiarize themselves with the less well-known songs. This will help them effectively lead the congregation in song.

Theme-based Song Services

- Announce a theme for upcoming song services in advance. Encourage people to share memories or stories related to a song that aligns with the theme. They could send their thoughts to a designated person.
- At the song services, the designated person could read the stories or memories before the song in question is sung.
- Ten or fifteen songs is an appropriate number of songs for one song service.

Two New Songs Every Song Service

- There is a tendency that people always want the same songs, and therefore many good songs get left to the wayside. The music staff can help by choosing a couple new songs for each song services gathering.

Practice Music Notation

- Learn music notation by hand motions. The organist plays the melody of a new or unfamiliar tune on the organ. A designated musician could show hand motions to indicate which way the music goes and how long to hold out each note.
- Project the melody on the screen and show and explain how the notes visually indicate the same things as the musician's hands. Explain that notes with white in the middle are longer and so on.

Assigned Singing Groups

- Select songs for song services and assign them to certain groups, such as children, men, women, song leaders, your church's choir or singing group.
- The groups could lead the songs that they are assigned.
- This could be one evening or many evenings, i.e. one event could feature children leading a few songs, another event could feature men and so on. Or all the groups could do 1–2 songs all on the same evening.
- Ask each group to go through each song and select which verses they will sing and which verses the whole congregation will sing.

Christmas Song Histories

- Over the years there have been a number of Christmas songs of Zion for which historical information and reflections have been provided in *Christmas in Zion* articles.
- At a Christmas song service, some songs could be selected for which histories exist. You can then share the history information for a particular with the congregation before singing the song in question. Often this background brings additional meaning and depth to the singing experience.
- Note that more recently, some information for Easter songs has also been published in *Easter Messenger*.