

GROWING MUSIC IN YOUR CHURCH

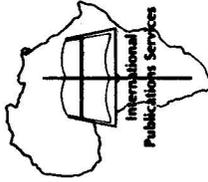


**By
M. G. MUTSOLI**

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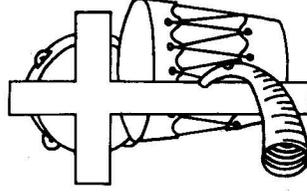
By
M. G. MUTSOLI

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Festivals and Retreats

I feel festivals are good and I encourage choirs to participate. Festivals allow you to see that there are other choirs who sing better than you. They give your choir members an opportunity to see new things and make new friends. They bring people of different tribes together. They are a learning experience. However, here are some cautions:

1. Some people rehearse only for festivals. They do not sing for the glory of God but for the thought of the trophy. When the festival is over, they leave the choir.
2. Some choirs meet only for practice for the festival and not for service in the church.

The purpose of the choir is to praise God, to glorify Jesus Christ and to help your church in worship and sharing Jesus Christ.

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I should mention the following cautions, however, concerning instruments:

1. Words are most important and drums or other instruments should never be played so loud as to cover the words.
2. People should know how to play the instruments and how to add them to the choir.
3. People should also know how to tune the instruments, such as the guitar.
4. I must say that electronic instruments are not good for accompanying singers in church. Because of the loud volume, the text is not heard. Worshipers may be offended by the harsh sounds.

Good Music

Good music depends on the culture of the people who hear and sing. To me, good music is music that has meaningful words, a good sound, and good theology. It is well arranged; it edifies the spirit.

Good music is always better when the text is understood by the listener. Good music sung with feeling and expression and good diction is the best music for praise to our God.

INTRODUCTION

"A Cup of Tea, Buttered Bread,
and a Fried Egg"

There was a choir director and several choir members who went visiting one Saturday afternoon. They visited the director of women in the church. They hoped that she would join the choir.

The hostess was very generous. She prepared well-brewed cups of tea, some buttered bread and fried eggs. The food was delicious. As they were swallowing the nicely prepared tea, the hostess began to talk.

She said, "Bwana (Mister), I want the pastor to lay hands on my child next Sunday."

The director replied, "Next Sunday!"

"Yes," she said.

One of the visiting choir members joined in, "Yes! We haven't laid hands on children for a long time." He continued, "And you know that Mrs. Fulani had a baby three months ago. I think she will be pleased to bring her baby too."

The director thought of another woman in the church who had had a baby recently. He nodded his head and agreed. Yes, it was an excellent idea.

"We can do it next Sunday, but we must see all of the mothers and let them know to prepare their

children. You inform the pastor. We will inform the mothers," added one of the choir members.

That next Sunday came to be. The pastor had been planning for the Lord's Table. The choir member had forgotten to ask him about the service.

The music director led the church in "Jesus Loves the Children" and other songs about children. The choir sang "God Loves Children."

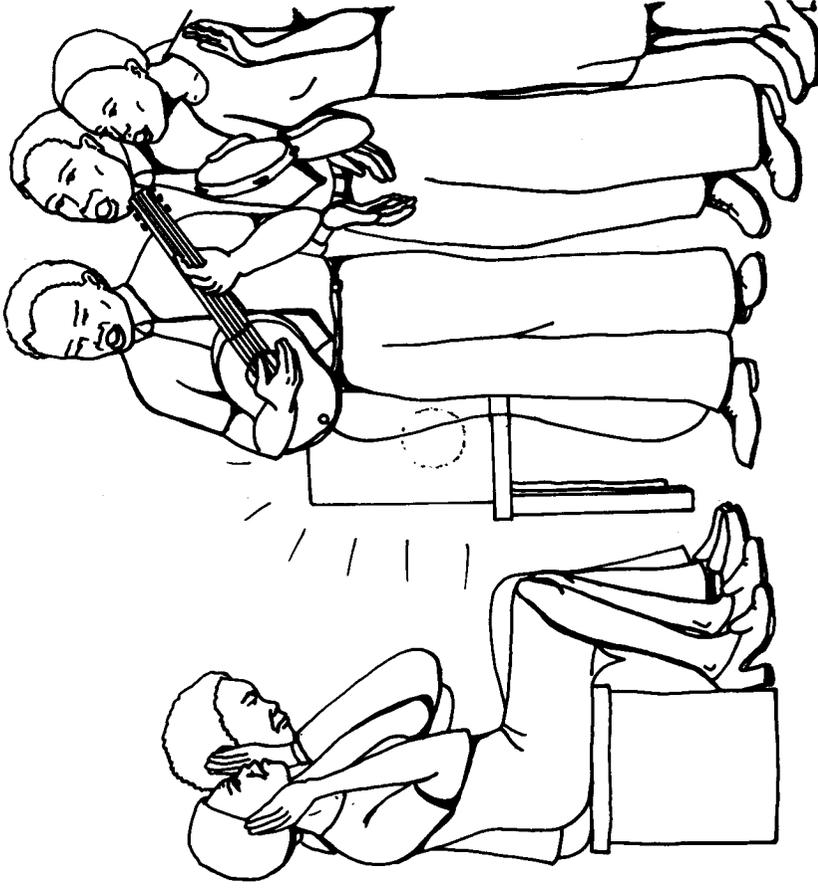
The pastor preached on the cross and Christ's sacrifice for the world. During the Lord's Table the director told the pastor of the plans. After the Lord's Table, the pastor laid hands on the children.

The service was not planned. The sermon and hymns did not match. There was a different message in the music and the sermon. The service was confusing to both the congregation and those who had planned it.

The music director, choir members and women's leader had been led astray from planning a good worship service with the pastor. The cup of tea, buttered bread, and a fried egg were so tasty that they forgot about previous plans.

* * * * *

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." Colossians 3:16.



"Because of the loud volume of electronic instruments, the text of the song is not heard. Worshipers may be offended by the harsh sounds."

It is the Lord who provides for your needs, not people. For example, there are some who feel that without them there would be no choir or church. They ask others to provide clothes, money, and things and when they fail to get them, they leave. These are not servants of the Lord. The Lord provides through people, but it is the Lord that provides.

Avoid boasting in any way. Be aware also of this attitude in singers. The choir should give their best to the Lord. False pride can lead to the downfall of the choir. Handle the problem with wisdom.

When directing music, it is good to have motion, feeling and relaxation, but do not exaggerate. The attention of the congregation will be on you and not on the music and worship of God. The same is true for singers. They should show emotion, but not to distract from the music and message by excessive jumping, shouting the song or exaggerating the words.

Instruments

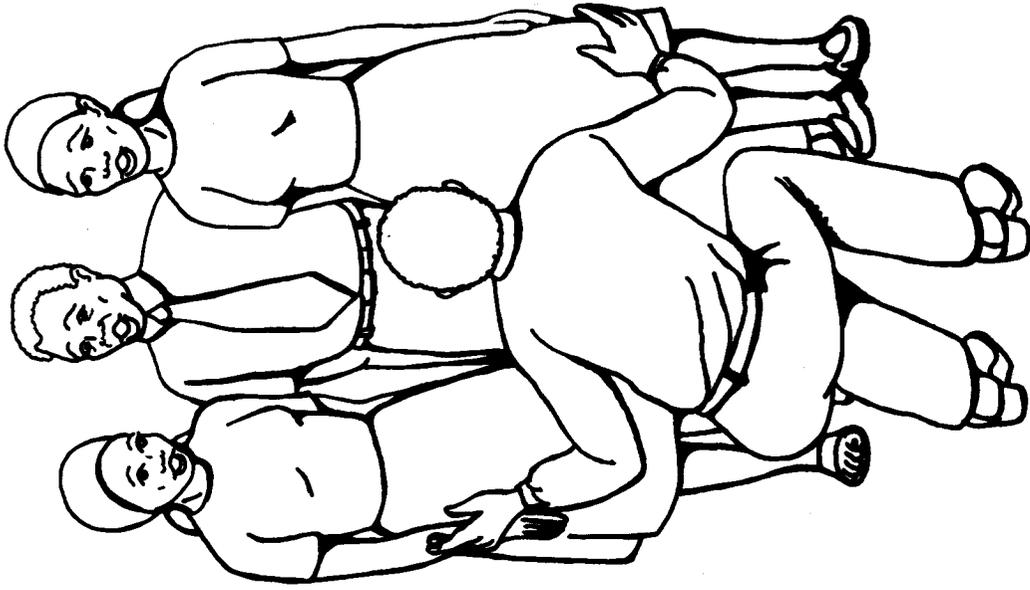
When missionaries first came to Africa, they preached that indigenous instruments were evil because they were used in evil things. To my way of thinking, when people are saved, the instruments are "saved" (used for the glory of God) with them. That is, they are used as tools of praise for the glory of God. They are no longer used by the Christian in his former ways. (There are many instruments mentioned in the Bible.) In this generation, it is good that instruments are used. Many Christians know how to play instruments and should do so in church.

Music is important to the church. Well prepared music in a worship service will draw people closer to God. It prepares them to receive His words through the message of the music and the message of the sermon. There is a Swahili expression, "You can't expect to get maize if you don't plant maize seed." If there is to be a meaningful worship service, the service must be planned and there must be planned music.

The people of Africa love good music. Many are attracted to the church first to hear the music. Music is important for the worship of God. It is important for use in sharing the Gospel with many people. The church should be concerned with music.

This book will cover the following topics which are essential in establishing strong, Christ-centered music in the churches:

1. The qualifications and work of the director of music.
2. How to select and begin the choir.
3. How to teach the choir.
4. Teaching a new hymn to the choir and to the church.
5. Words of wisdom from the author concerning:
 - (a) money, how to avoid problems
 - (b) pride and people
 - (c) what is good music
 - (d) festivals, good and bad aspects



"When directing music, it is good to have motion, feeling and relaxation, but do not exaggerate. The attention of the congregation will be on you and not on the music and worship of God."



"If there is to be a meaningful worship service, the service must be planned and there must be planned music."

CHAPTER V

Words of Wisdom

The following are words the author wishes to share with you, the reader. They are born of experience and can help avoid problems that might arise.

Money

Do not be the choir director and the treasurer of the choir. Do not handle money. Even if you intend the best, people misunderstand easily about money and may accuse you of wrong doing. This will cause hurt feelings and be detrimental (bad) to your ministry.

Select a choir treasurer to work with the church treasurer. Money should be handled through the church. The choir is not a separate organization, but a part of the church.

Spend money openly. Let all know how the money is to be spent, where, when and why. Be responsible and accountable!

It is wise to have (elder) advisors from the deacons or elders in these and other matters.

Pride and People

Do not feel that you are the only good director. Be humble. Remember that you are working for the Lord and not for the praise of men.

CHAPTER I

Who Is The Director of Music?

The director of music in the church should be a follower of Jesus Christ. Because the director will lead others, it is essential that he be led by Jesus Christ. He is an example to those he leads.

There are many times when churches do not have a man with the gift of leading music. They run to get a man who is not of the same denomination. This is done because "he is gifted and smart with music." There is much danger in following this practice. This man may give a bad picture of the belief of that church. For example, some denominations do not have beliefs against drinking beer. If a man is chosen from one of these denominations to lead music in our churches, he may lead others to this practice. In this manner, he is a salesman for his faith, selling a variety of beliefs.

The music director should teach others by a life which reflects the teachings of the Bible. The following are some spiritual qualifications of the director of music.

Spiritual Qualifications of the Director of Music

1. He should be a follower of Jesus Christ, faithful to God and his church, following the teachings of the Bible.
2. He should be baptized.

3. He should recognize the other departments of the church to be equal with his own, i.e., he should attend Sunday School and encourage his choir to do likewise.

4. He should be patient.

5. He should have love and respect for all people, especially "wazee" (those of long age).

6. He should have good sense to lead, to reconcile, to bring peace to the quarrelsome. He can help them to remember the significance of God through singing.

Some directors come to worship services only to lead the choir and the singing. They leave the service without assisting others of the church to worship or even expressing worship themselves. These directors are not worthy to be leaders. The director of music is a link in the church. He is like the youth director, the Sunday School director and even the pastor. He is a leader and must be a good example.

Music Qualifications of the Director

In order to direct good singing, the music director must have singing ability. He may have knowledge about music of the church, but he must also have the gift of singing. If he is unable to sing, then those whom he tries to lead will not sing. It is suitable that he lead by the example of good singing.

4. The third time, the hymn is sung completely through.

The director should know the hymn well himself. He should select a good starting pitch. The choir must know the hymn. The director should not be afraid to help the congregation with a section of the hymn they might not be able to sing.

the singer attempts the new part.
Only a small section should be done at one time. Allow the singers to learn that section before continuing through the entire song.

3. After the part has been learned, it may be added to the soprano part--in this order--alto, tenor, bass. Each part should be combined with the soprano one by one until all have been added.

Teaching a Hymn to the Congregation

The congregation likes to learn new hymns. They may be shy at first. The choir can be of assistance by leading out in the singing of the new hymn. The following steps will be of help:

1. The director may sing the hymn through completely, while the congregation listens.
2. The director can then sing only a phrase allowing the congregation to repeat. This is done throughout the hymn, phrase by phrase.
3. Repeat again in the same manner. The congregation can be told that if they know the coming phrase they may sing "in the heart" (hum) with the director.

There are people who are able to play musical instruments very well, but they are not able to sing. It is not wise for these people to lead singing. They are quite capable of teaching others to play instruments. It is difficult for these to teach others to sing when they are unable to sing themselves.

The following are musical qualifications of the director:

1. He should have the talent or gift of music. He should be creative in singing, playing instruments and composing.
2. He should be able to teach others how to sing the correct notes of the music.
3. He should know tonic sol-fa and/or staff notation in order to keep the pitches of the song he may be teaching.
4. He should have an "ear" for music, that is, he should be able to hear which voices are not balanced and know who is singing off key. He is able then to correct the errors and bring the music into perfect balance.

What Is Appropriate for the Director of Music?

There are times when the director may feel awkward. The following are some suggestions which may help him to feel at ease in front of the church or the group he is leading:

1. He should stand in front of the congregation when directing hymns in the church.
2. He should teach others to direct music. In his absence, there needs to be one to assist in the directing of music. If he neglects to teach someone, he has robbed his church of other talent.
3. He should teach the choir and congregation to share in new hymns.
4. He should plan the worship service with the pastor and others who preach.
5. He should plan for the hymns which will follow the theme of the service. For example, if there is to be a funeral, he should choose and plan music which is related to the funeral.
6. The director should prepare the choir before the service. They should know what they will sing, where they will sit during the service, and when they will stand during the songs of the choir.

1. Begin to teach the soprano or melody first to all singers. It is the principal voice. It is possible to teach only the voice part that a person sings. This is quicker but the shortcomings can be illustrated by this true parable.

"One day a singer of a famous choir was asked to visit a rural choir and teach the members a new song. This singer came from a choir that was indeed known for its cleverness in singing. This man began to teach the choir the new song. He had learned only the bass part in his choir so he taught only the bass part. One of the rural singers asked him, "Sir, is that truly the song which we have asked you to teach us?" He answered, "Yes, that is how we sing."

O, Maskini! (Poor man!) This man did not know the melody because he had not been taught the melody. Therefore, it is important to teach the melody first to all singers. It may take longer, but it is important.

2. After the melody is learned, the other parts may be taught one at a time. The director should sing each part several times before

CHAPTER IV

How To Teach a New Song

The director should select music for his church and choir first because of the text. The text should be of good quality, giving a true and meaningful expression of the Christian faith. The melody must be easy for people to sing. Tunes that are difficult to sing will cause the congregation and choir to become discouraged.

Once the song has been selected, the meaning of the song must be made known. A song in another language or dialect should be explained.

It is also important that a correct pitch be selected before singing, one that is neither too high nor too low.

The director should only lead hymns that he knows. He should not try to teach a hymn he does not know. There are some directors who create problems for themselves by trying to teach a new hymn without knowing the hymn. A good director will prepare what he will say and do in teaching the new hymn before the rehearsal or service.

Teaching the Choir a New Song

Through experience the following has been proven to be the best method of teaching a new song:

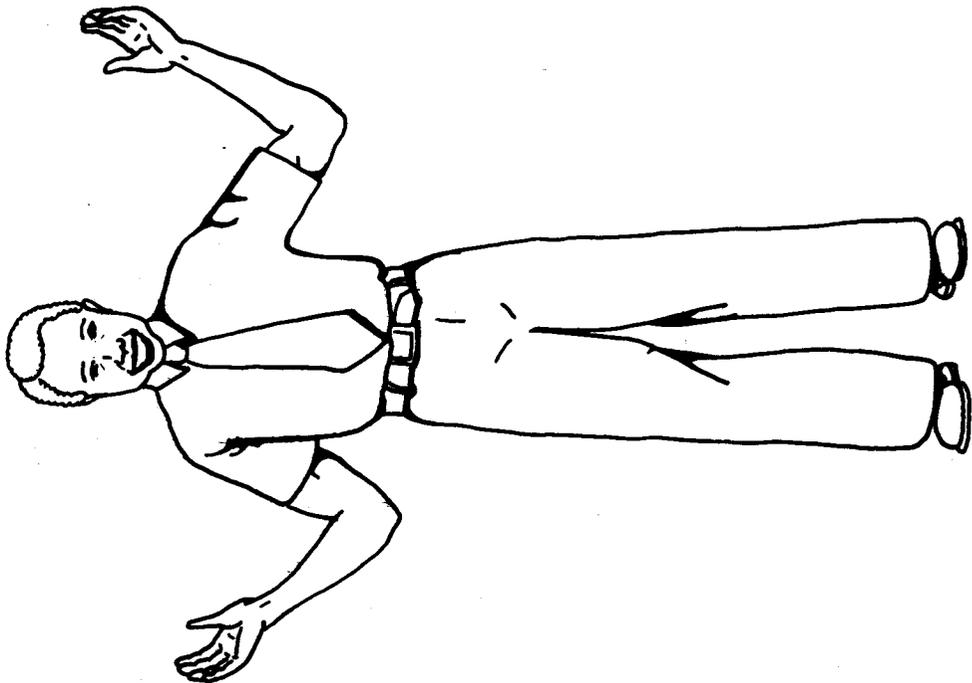
7. Both he and his choir should be prepared with music and starting pitches. Busy movements detract from worship.

Matters From Which the Director Must Protect Himself

There are matters which the director of the choir must guard against. If he fails in these matters, his choir members will lose respect for him. His choir will also be of poor quality. He should not:

1. Fail to spend time in prayer and preparation.
2. Rule the choir, never giving them freedom to think or speak.
3. Use bad language or insulting remarks. (When this appears in choir members, he must use wisdom in correcting their attitudes.)
4. Think too highly of himself.
5. Use deceit, lie, or make fun of mistakes.
6. Be involved in romantic pursuits with church choir members.

I Thessalonians 5:12-22 is a pattern for Christian conduct. The director should pray unceasingly for wisdom and strength. His supreme prayer should be to exalt Jesus Christ and to have a heart to praise Him.



5. Work on a small section at one time.
- B. Advantages of listening are in hearing:
 1. Incorrect notes.
 2. Correct tempo (speed) of the song.
 3. Pronunciation of the words.
 4. Correct mood of the song.
 5. Balance of voices (some singers sing louder than others with more volume or force).
 6. Correct harmony of the song.
 7. Quality of the voice, whether coarse or fine.
- C. The choir should listen:
 1. To the advice of the director.
 2. To examples, by the director, several times before attempting to sing.
 3. While others are singing for the director or being corrected.

prepared for the teaching of the new song. Only thirty to forty minutes are needed for teaching. After the teaching of the new song, the rehearsal can be ended with a familiar song.

Listening

Listening is important in helping the choir to have a good sound. There will be those who make mistakes. These singers may sing the wrong notes or pronounce the words incorrectly. If the director wants to catch the mistakes, he must listen to his singers. He will fail to hear the mistakes if he is singing with them instead of listening to them. Below is an outline for listening and correcting:

- A. The director should:
1. Listen to all voices singing together the entire song.
 2. Listen to voices two by two for a section of the song.
 3. Listen to voices one by one. He will catch mistakes and may find a "frog". (He should be wise not to call a person a frog.)
 4. After hearing mistakes, he should not correct with scorn or anger. When correcting the individual, care should be shown that the person is good but the voice needs improvement. God only can give wisdom in this matter. When a singer continues to make mistakes, do not continue to correct. This may cause him to feel unfit and then totally abandon singing.

CHAPTER II

Selecting and Beginning a Church Choir

What is a Church Choir?

There are two kinds of church choirs. One is a "WAVU" (fish net) choir. When the fisherman goes fishing, he throws out the net and keeps everything caught in the net--the fish, crabs, lobster, eel and even a frog or two. (He does not throw back the part of the catch which some people may consider bad.) As Jesus takes control of the non-believers and changes their lives from bad to good, so must the director take hold of the choir and cause the bad voices to become good voices.

The second choir is the foundation of the "wavu", or may come from it. It is the evangelistic choir sharing the gospel to others. This is the real church choir. The Spirit of Christ dwells with them. They sing what Christ has done for them.

What is the Purpose of the Church Choir?

The purpose of the church choir is to exalt Christ and praise God through leading in worship. The church choir should draw others to Jesus Christ through music and witnessing.

What Does the Church Choir Do?

It is the responsibility of the church choir to lead the church in singing in all services where

they are needed. These would be regular worship services, funerals, weddings, etc.

The choir is a help in teaching the church new music. That is to say, if the director wants to teach a new song, he can first teach the choir. The choir then will lead the congregation in learning. Without this help, many members of the congregation are shy in learning and singing a new song.

Another responsibility of the church choir is to help the church in witnessing to others through its singing and personal testimony. It should be stated here that the church choir exists for the purpose of helping its own church to worship and to grow. The choir should be willing to sing in other churches and help other churches grow. It should not sing in other churches at the expense of robbing its own church of its members on worship days.

Selecting Choir Members

There are many ways to select choir members. The "wavy" method has been mentioned. A house choir or a family choir is possible. It may be necessary to even beg for a choir. Through experience it appears that the best way of selecting choir members is to select first only those who are faithful members of the church. They should have good voices and be willing to sing. The director should ask them individually. A few will respond. He will work with those few for a good foundation. He then can open the choir to all people. Those few qualified members will be the key to success. They will help those with less commitment or musical ability.

4. After prayer, begin with an easy hymn or chorus first--one that the choir knows or that will be easy to learn.

5. Relay the meaning of the song. If there is a joyful song, there should be joy; if there is a sad song, there should be sadness expressed in the singing.

6. The director should be flexible and relaxed in the rehearsal. There should be a short rest period sometime during the rehearsal. Singers become fatigued (tired) without rest.

7. The director should allow the singers opportunity to ask questions concerning the hymn. There will be people of different tribes and dialects in the choir. They will need explanation of word sounds and clarification of meanings. Their questions should be answered briefly before returning to singing.

8. The rehearsal should be concluded with a hymn or chorus which the singers know well. They are then permitted to leave.

At each rehearsal the order is repeated. Begin the rehearsal with a song that the singers know. They will be able to open their throats and voices and sing. In this way, they will be

As has been stated, when teaching a choir, the director should remember that singers will tire after a long rehearsal. They may even lose enthusiasm. Therefore, it is important to plan the rehearsal.

Remember these things when planning a rehearsal:

1. People of today plan their time to match their busy lives. The director should be considerate of their time.
2. Thirty minutes is long enough to teach a new song. After thirty minutes on one song, the singers will become tired. The director should be able to recognize when his singers are tired.
3. The director should not just sing but take the opportunity to correct wrong sounds. He should explain how to pronounce certain words.

Below is a list of suggestions for leading a rehearsal:

1. Spend time in prayer and Bible study before the rehearsal.
2. Know the hymns to be taught before the rehearsal.
3. Begin with prayer.

The difficulty in opening the choir to all church members at first is that a few frogs may appear. One must remember that frogs too love to sing the one tune they are able to sing. A good foundation will make it easier to help them. They are able to share a testimony through hearing, speaking, or making a joyful noise to the Lord.

Concerning the people with no singing ability (the director should never call them frogs), it is advisable that when competitions are held or times when the best is needed, that they should politely be asked not to sing. They should be asked to listen or mouth the words. They must always be present as part of the choir. The "wavu" singers can be shaped and molded to become an instrument of God.

Beginning the Choir

Once the singers have been selected, the director should plan with the singers. A day and hour for practice which are suitable for all should be determined. A place for meeting should be selected. The following steps are important. They will help the director to begin choir without confusion.

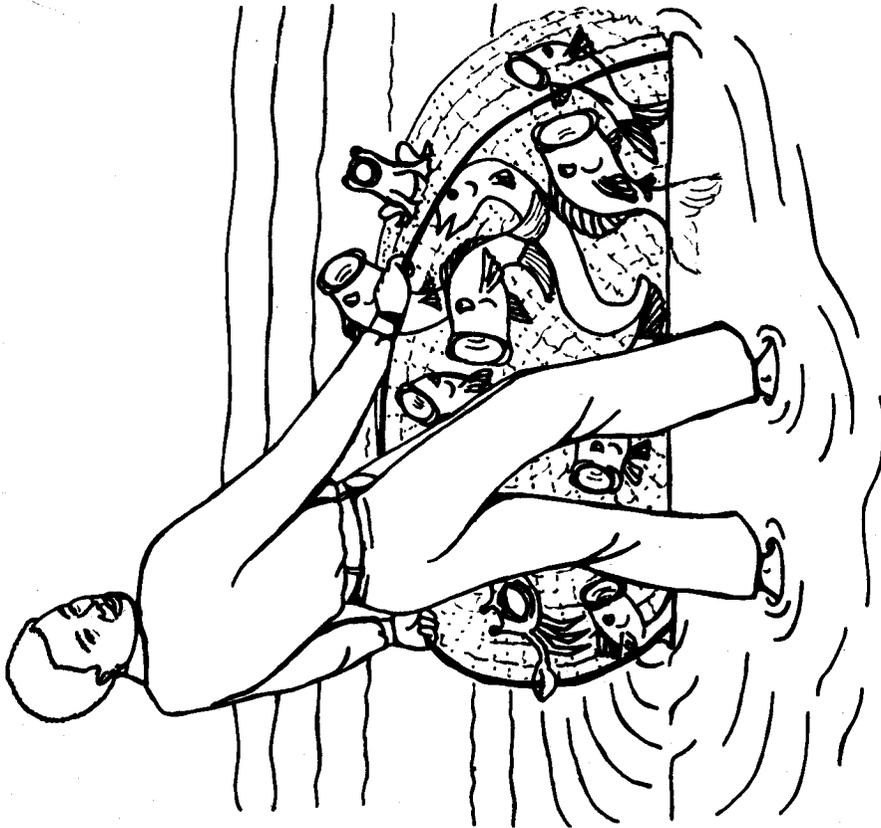
1. Plan with the singers.
2. Select a day and hour for the rehearsal suitable to all.
3. Select a place for the rehearsal.

CHAPTER III

How To Teach A Choir

The director should remember the following facts about his responsibility and the choir rehearsal:

1. The director must be on time.
2. When the director arrives for the practice, he must begin at once to teach. If he does not begin to teach, he has wasted the hour for the singers. When only one singer comes to the rehearsal, the director will work with that one singer until the hour is spent. There will be some singers who arrive late. They will ask to continue the rehearsal past the hour. He should not extend the rehearsal because they were late. The director must ask them to arrive on time. In this way, they will know that they should start on time.
3. There are directors who like to consume too much time for a rehearsal. A long rehearsal tires the singers. Even too much time rehearsing one number tires the singers. It is important to plan early, be on time, start on time, end on time! If a few beg to stay for extra help, allow the others to leave on time.



"The Wavu Choir"

"When the fisherman goes fishing, he throws out the net and keeps everything caught in the net."