

# Choir Tips: Selection, Voicing, Rehearsals and Children's Choir

By David Ezell

## Selection

Many of the available secular works are better for New Thought churches than the sacred works. Sacred pieces many times have ideas about God and the universe that are not in accord with what is taught in New Thought. Many secular works are about fulfilling life's purpose, feeling joyful, loving your neighbor, the power of beauty and music, and world peace. These are just the topics that a New Thought choir likes to sing about.

There is an abundance of useful music in popular styles, so some churches like to look for appropriate classical selections that can be used to balance the repertoire. It is better to go to a website, store, or reading session where one can see the music, than to order from a catalog description.

## Voicing

For a small choir, it may be best to use alternate voicings, rather than SATB. Unfortunately, most of the available two- and three-part music is written for young adolescents. Many times these selections can work for adult church choir, but it is best to be careful about the ranges of the voice parts as well as the maturity level of the lyrics and the music.

Three-part mixed and SATB usually have the men's part too high to be comfortable for bass voices, which is a majority of men. Many times two-part women's arrangements are written for two equal voices, and there may not be a part that is comfortable for adult altos. As long as there is a strong leader for each section, a choir can be as small as necessary and still perform beautifully.

## Rehearsals

If a choir sings from sheet music, not just lyric sheets, it helps the development of the choir. Some of your members will probably read music while others can learn about the meaning of the notation. Also, singing the written notes helps to make sure the harmony is as full and complete as planned by the composer/arranger.

If everyone just finds a comfortable note that sounds good, important parts of chords can be missing, and only the most obvious of harmonies will be used. Even if music reading per se is not taught in rehearsal, choir members can still notice the notes. They can see that from each note to the next is either, up, down or the same. They can also be taught to find their notes first and then look for the words that match the notes. Otherwise, they may end up singing someone else's part.

After attending rehearsals over a period of time, choir members also pick up ideas about how rhythm notation works. Diction requires constant reminders. It is important for the congregation to get the message in addition to enjoying the music. However, projecting the lyrics on a screen during a choir performance can divide the attention of the listener.

### **Children's Choir**

Children can sing a song every week during class. After several weeks, when they know the song well, they can be scheduled to sing during a service. Younger children can read from lyric sheets, and older ones from lead sheets. If children are taking music lessons, they can be given the opportunity to play when appropriate. Congregations enjoy children's performances.

