

Make a Joyful Noise!

(Notes ☺ on Being a Choir Member at First Parish Church of Groton, MA)

This is a list of some things that should be kept in mind when participating in a church choir or any other singing group.

1. Smile ☺
2. You should be able to match (sing) any pitch played (*ex.* on piano) that is within your vocal range.
3. You should strive to soften any natural edge in your voice so that your voice will blend well with others. Be cognizant of how others around you are singing so that your voice blends and does not overpower those around you.
4. Although it is not necessary to read music, it is best to become familiar with the meanings of various markings and notations, such as "*forte, mf, p, mp, cresc.*" and others.
5. Getting to rehearsals regularly and on time is extremely important.
6. Every rehearsal begins with a warm up. It is important to take part in this. The various exercises are meant to improve your breathing, tone, intonation and articulation. Breathing in should be full and silent. Breath control is very important.
7. Vocal music is carried on vowel sounds, not consonants, so it is important to hold vowels for the full value of its assigned note and end the sound with the consonant at the very end of the note or at the beginning of the next beat if it is a rest. Often consonants are connected to adjoining words to keep the music flowing. The director will decide on these matters. If you should run out of breath before the end of a long note, you should stop singing on the vowel and not add the consonant. Fainting is not a preferred option.
8. The letter "R" is a tricky letter that often requires exaggeration. As used in the word "lord" (for example) the choral sound is much better if it is pronounced "lawd". There may be times when the director will ask to "Rrroll the R, if you can". In this case the "R" should be exaggerated, as in the word, "Harrrrrumpf".
9. Speaking of the word, "Lord", it is perhaps important that, as choir members, we don't pay too much attention to the text with regards to spiritual meaning. If we are singing a Bach piece (as example), you will note that since Bach was not a UU the words will not necessarily be in line with the common thoughts of our church. There are times when we sing a piece of music for its musical value, so look beyond your personal thoughts on the subject and be assured the director will take the flack if there are "too many alleluia's" in an anthem.