

## How to Run a Youth Choir Rehearsal

Consistory Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry  
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### I. Introduction

Music is an intrinsic part of our Orthodox worship. Involving our youth in this important ministry will grant them a deeper connection to our Lord and His Church. We recommend that you fully integrate your youth into your choir. Arrange for them to have a “highlight” during the service. In this way, they are full members of the parish body and at the same time given a moment to offer their gifts to God in a unique way. You may also choose to have your youth be the main choir for special services.

### II. Major Goal

Our hope is to help our youth feel more confident in participating in the singing and chanting of Liturgical music and chanting. This module will help leaders run a productive youth choir rehearsal emphasizing the use of a good clear singing voice.

### III. Age Group: Mid/High School

This particular session is for 13 -18 years of age.

### IV. Need Items

Warm-up Exercises Video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wm1IDpLzjh8&t=676s>

Resource – Introducing Orthodox Liturgical Music to Children

[http://ww1.antiochian.org/sites/default/files/childrens\\_course\\_ii\\_complete.pdf](http://ww1.antiochian.org/sites/default/files/childrens_course_ii_complete.pdf)

Quotes on church chanting and singing

Music Stands ( optional )

Pitch pipe or small keyboard

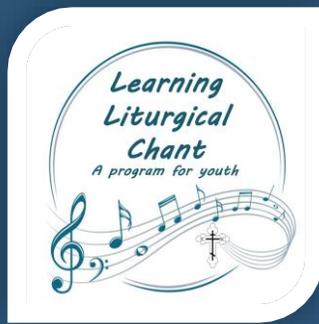
Be the Bee #113 – Why Do We Sing in the Church? <https://www.goarch.org/-/why-do-we-sing-in-church->

All music may be found at

<https://uocyouth.orthodoxws.com/admin/page.php?pageid=78&view=&msg=1>

Lord’s Prayer

Tropar of the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross – O Lord Save Thy People.



Tropar Christ Is Risen!

They Stripped Me of My Garments – Tone 2

Who is so great a God as our God?

#### **V. What they will learn**

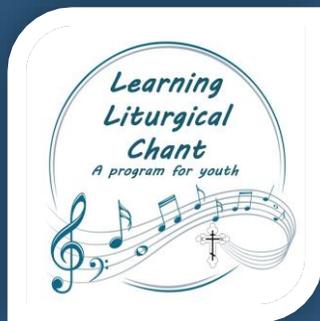
- a) To Sing a varied repertoire with accurate rhythm and pitch individually and with others.
- b) Follow and respond to the cues of the director
- c) Using their voice to produce a clear sound while maintaining appropriate posture
- d) Why we sing in the Orthodox Church

#### **VI. Preparation**

- a) Watch the videos How to Run a Youth Choir and Be the Bee #113 – Why Do We Sing in the Church?
- b) Ensure the music is copied and ready for the youth
- c) Read the resource – Introducing Orthodox Liturgical Music to Children. Read the sections for Objectives 1-4. These will help you further your skills with: Singing on Pitch, singing in a Group, Singing Complicated Rhythms, and Introduction to Reading Music
- d) Print out the quotes on church chanting and singing (see below).
- e) You may want to print out the provided prayers for each young person to have or to place on the music stands.
- f) Choose your warm-up music or exercise. Try to choose something fun that will engage the youth and engage their voice by hearing high and low sounds. You may gather ideas and techniques within the Youth Choir Video.

#### **VII. Conducting the Session**

Ensure that you allot enough time to work with your youth. You may choose to do this as a special workshop day or throughout your year. Choose your space so that you have proper room to sit or stand or move around for warm-up exercises.



Start with a prayer. You may use the prayers below from the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians.

### **One of the Oldest Prayers for Chanters and Church Singers**

Through the prayers of St. John the Damascene, St. Romanos the Melodist, St. John Koukouzelis, and all of our Holy Fathers, Our Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us!

We pray to You to open and consecrate our spiritual and physical hearing, and give us the strength to testify with our modest mouth Your endless perfections in fullness of Truth, Goodness, and Beauty.

Help us to clean ourselves, in body and soul, in clear thoughts and calm spirit, and that through singing that we dress ourselves in light of love and life, in communion with You and all the saints.

Help us to praise and glorify You through singing in a proper way, fervently praying and endlessly praising You for all the undeserved gifts that you have poured upon us, and not to sing in vanity and to judge ourselves, but to join the Angelic choirs who constantly glorify You with Your Eternal Father and with Your Most Holy, Meek, and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever and unto the ages of all ages. Amen.

### **A Prayer for before Singing**

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

O God, whose saints and angels delight to worship in heaven:

Be ever present with your servants who seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by Your people on earth;

And grant to them even now a glimpse of Your beauty and make them worthy at length to behold it forevermore.

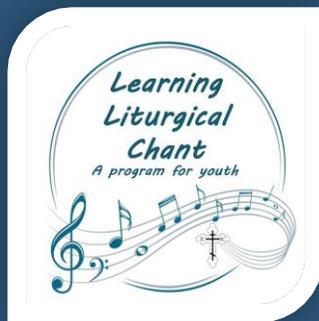
Through the prayers of the Theotokos and of all the saints, have mercy on us. Amen.

### **A Prayer for after Singing**

Bless us, O Lord, Your servants, who minister in Your Church;

Grant that what we sing with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts we may practice and show forth in our lives.

For unto You we offer glory, to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.

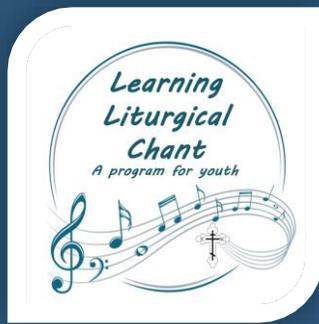


Begin by watching Be the Bee #113 – Why do We Sing in the Church? Be prepared to stop the video around the 3:35 mark. At this point explain that in the Ukrainian church we use different music for the tones. Each of the church has their own unique tones. The ones demonstrated in the video are from the Byzantine tradition. After each of the examples, pause and sing our version of the tone. Perhaps ask the youth if they already know the tone for that example and share with the group.

Following the video. Ask the youth what they learned that they had not know before. Allow time for discussion.

At this point, if you have enough youth break them into groups. Give each group one of the quotes. Ask them to discuss the quote and what they think it means concerning how we should approach singing within the church.

- *In the Orthodox Faith, our singing in church is meant to be an Icon of worship. We sing our prayers. Our prayers are sung. And hardly ever do we hear prayers simply said. The Orthodox Church's tradition is to offer up prayers to God in uttered heightened speech called sacred singing. It is important to understand that liturgical music is not something added to prayer. Rather, it is the way we pray in church when we assemble together as God's People. "These Truths We Hold - The Holy Orthodox Church: Her Life and Teachings". Compiled and Edited by A Monk of St. Tikhon's Monastery.*
- *We've been told that singers should listen to each other for a good blend. The tenors should listen to each other, and then the tenors should listen to the sopranos. The sopranos ought to listen to the altos, etc., etc. That's fine for the street. For the church singer it is not the tenor, alto, or soprano who stands next to you we need to listen to, but the angels who lead us in our singing. Those are the voices we need to hear and with which we blend our voices. What can sound beautiful to us can sound like cacophony at the throne of God, if we are not singing with the angels. His Grace Bishop Basil*
- *"The psalmody which takes place in the church is an entreaty to God. Now he who makes an entreaty and prays must be in a state of humility and contrition. Whereas an unduly loud voice manifest audacity and irreverence. One of the techniques that many chanters and choirs use is attempting to interpret to the congregation what the text means. Very loud at one point and very soft at another point, then slow, then fast. That is as artificial as controlling the emotions of those who stand in our churches by dimming the lights or turning them on bright. Your task is to sing, not to interpret. The Holy Spirit is the One who will lead us into the knowledge of all truth, not the choir director or the chanter. Again, he who prays must be in a state of humility of contrition." St. Nikodemus of the Holy Mountain*



- *St. Elias the Presbyter counsels us, saying, “When through continuous prayer the words of the psalms and hymns are brought down into the heart, then the heart like good soil begins to produce by itself, various flowers: roses, the vision of the incorporeal realities; lilies, the luminosity of corporeal realities; and violets, the many judgments of God, difficult to understand.” There are the gifts, the graces that come to the church singer who sings with humility and contrition, who leaves aside his or her own personality and idiosyncrasies. His Grace Bishop Basil*

Allow each group to read their quote and present to the group their thoughts on the quote. Guide the discussion as needed.

Next show the video – Warm Up Exercise Video which may be found at the [Consistory Youtube Channel](#) or OYM Resource page.

Following the video, you may begin working on the Lord’s Prayer.

As mentioned at the beginning of this session, this will take more than one meeting with your youth or to make this a workshop for a day or at a retreat.