

when you are in town, you are here

by Thomas Vozella



Thomas Vozella, the Director of Worship Arts at First Presbyterian Church, Rapid City, South Dakota, and on the faculty of Walden University, has been involved in music ministry since he was fifteen.

To sing, or not to sing, that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler to attend rehearsal, or sit out a Sunday or two... "be all my sins remember'd" (William Shakespeare, Hamlet 3/1).

Excuse the poetic liberty taken here. However, how does one assist choral singers to make rehearsals and Sunday worship a priority? Let's see, what are some of the numerous phrases that have been used to this end, such as the verse from Romans, "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office:" (King James Bible, Romans 12:4). When one misses a rehearsal or a

they attend? No, that won't work, as we are living in a "don't tell me what to do" world. Maybe we threaten them with expulsion. But since choir is a volunteer ministry, you can't fire volunteers, can you?

There are those that supply a list of rules, guidelines, manuals, etc., on being a faithful choir member. Having created a 190+ page music ministry manual myself, although necessary, it is cumbersome. Honestly, does it have to be so complicated? Let's face it; it is a blessing just to have a church choir in the 21st century.

If you are waiting for the big build up, the moment when the key to successful attendance is revealed, please don't be disappointed, as it is just this: "When you are in town, you are here."

This is a no guilt, no pain way that has worked to get our volunteers to rehearsals.

If someone is going on vacation, there is no need to make them feel bad, as they have attended whenever in town. A singer's daughter's graduation from college is on a Cantata weekend, for instance. Although it is not a good time to be away, it is a necessary family event. So, as the slogan goes: "When you are in town, you are here," and they were. *fine*

We are living in a "don't tell me what to do" world

Sunday, they weaken the body. Maybe, even leave the group with a missing limb or two. There seems to be a generous amount of these tidbits of spiritual emphasis placed on attendance. I am sure you have your favorite.

Yes, our priority should be to serve God. Yet face it, attending church, never mind rehearsals on a regular basis, is negotiable in light of all the social pressures of society. Granted, this is not the case in all churches, or is it?

How do we overcome this seemingly lack of commitment? Do we insist that

The question remains, regarding the development of faithful ensemble members, how do we overcome the obstacles that keep that commitment at arms length?

With this in mind, and upon reflection and discernment, I decided that there was a need for an overarching goal for music ministry attendance – a slogan, a mantra of sorts – that would put it into perspective. The development of this simple slogan, in our ministry, allowed us to discuss the all-encompassing basic principle of attendance.

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