

PREPARING TO SERVE: 10 TOOLS & TIPS

We are a small but gifted team of musicians and artists at CFC. As we continue to grow and mature as a team it's absolutely critical that we set standards for one another in how we properly prepare for serving at weekend services and other special events. Setting standards for you in this area is only going to help us improve in the consistency of our performance. A coworker once told me the 5 P's of Success - Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance. If we all do our due diligence in preparing properly to serve on a consistent basis then I'm absolutely confident that will succeed in leading our congregation to worship Jesus passionately, professionally, and with excellence.

TOOLS

1. Planning Center Online

Planning Center Online (PCO) is crucial to everything we do in Worship Arts. PCO is the main vehicle through which we communicate and good communication is vital to the success of any organization. It can be downloaded for free on your smartphone, or you can sign in at <https://planning.center/>. PCO offers many tools at our disposal to succeed in ministry and it's important that you all are plugged into PCO and understand how best to use it when you serve.

1. **NOTES** - PCO keeps us all on the same page by communicating notes and instructions for instrumentalists and singers. Each song usually includes notes about parts, arrangements, etc. that you should be checking regularly when you serve.
2. **PLANS & MEDIA PLAYER** - When you serve you have access to both the Plan for the week (order of service with notes/instructions) AND the Media Player to help you rehearse. You should always be familiarizing yourself with both the plan and the included media files. Listening to only the media player and never checking the notes for the song will not properly prepare you for rehearsal. Checking only the plan and not checking to see all the media files associated to each song will also not properly prepare you for rehearsal.
3. **PEOPLE** - Find out who you are serving with. Are there multiple singers? What parts do they sing? Are there multiple keys players or guitar players? How will who is on affect my performance and preparation?

Bottom line: you should be using Planning Center to come as prepared as possible to rehearsal knowing exactly what to expect and in so doing - everyone else will know what to expect from you.

2. Files

Every song in PCO has multiple attachments connected to it. Chord sheets, lyric sheets, number charts, YouTube videos, mp3s, etc. We strongly recommend that if you have a printer at home you print out the lyrics or chord charts on your own. As you listen to

the music take notes on your print-outs - where are your main parts happening, what are those parts, highlight where you are singing, how does the song build dynamically, etc.

Every Monday our Worship Arts Assistant prepares binders of music for the coming weekend. You are welcome to take these binders home with you when you serve so long as you remember to bring them back when your weekend is over. You can even swing by the church and pick up a binder a few days ahead of rehearsal if you don't have a printer at home.

3. Instrumentalists - Equipment and Access

If you don't have access to rehearsal space or equipment/instruments to rehearse and prepare successfully please notify the worship arts director immediately. Solutions to this problem include rehearsing at church, borrowing equipment from someone in the ministry, rehearsing at someone else's house or rehearsal space, etc. This team is a family, we want to help one another succeed. If you are lacking the tools necessary to properly rehearse and prepare for serving then we need to work together as a team to remedy that quickly.

4. Search the Web

We do our best to provide you with every piece of material we can to help you learn your parts. If there are charts that you need access to that we do not or are not providing please notify us of your needs and we'll do the best we can to provide it. We are working hard at building a library of vocal part recordings for the vocalists but it takes a lot of time to make this happen. With that said, the internet is filled with tutorials and charts for most of the music we do at church. A simple youtube or google search may provide you with everything you need to learn your parts but it requires YOUR INITIATIVE to do this research to accurately prepare in a way that specifically suits your needs.

TIPS

5. Repeat, Repeat, Repeat

There is no such thing as being *too* familiar with the music. We strongly encourage you to listen to the setlist for the week on repeat as much as possible. Listen through the PCO app, create a playlist in Spotify, or purchase the songs for your own library. Listen in the car on the way to and from work or out running errands, listen in your headphones at work or at the gym. Whatever you can do to be listening to the music as much as possible will only help ingrain the music into your heart and head.

Here's a process we recommend in listening and preparing that includes listening through each song at least 3 times each BEFORE even picking up your instrument and playing along:

1. **First Time** - Listen for general flow, structure, arrangement and dynamics. Take notes. Familiarize yourself with how the song rises and falls. How does it move you? What's happening in the song that stands out to you? What are the main hooks?
2. **Second Time** - listen specifically for your parts. Where are your parts in the song and how do they enter and exit and fit inside and support the song as a whole.
3. **Third Time** - Listen specifically for the other parts in the song and how they complement and contrast yours (i.e. - other vocal parts, electric guitar parts, piano/synth parts, etc.)
4. **Fourth Time** - This is when you can start playing/singing along with the song and really learning and rehearsing your parts.

6. Playing Along

As you listen each time, take notes on the files/music you've printed out. Start with the intro/turnaround hook of the song, then move to Verse 1. Listen to Verse 1 a couple times on repeat before moving to the next verse or chorus and bridge. Work on perfecting one part of the song before moving on to the next.

If you're having trouble with a song, reach out to your team leaders or other team members for tips, advice and help. We're here to help one another succeed.

7. Replication

We don't always want to make carbon copies of every song. We desire to bring our own originality, personality and style into our worship. With that said, our motto is "Replication before creation." We should aim to first show our ability to replicate the parts in the songs before we modify them to at all to fit our own original style and ability. Come prepared first to replicate what you've heard and then as a team we can discuss and work out how we might modify and make changes to the parts to best suit our instrumentation and style.

8. Adjusting Keys & The Nashville Number System

Lead vocalists, if the worship leader chooses a key that is too high or low for you to lead on a song, please notify him/her immediately to make adjustments. We try hard to pick keys that fit the vocalist well, but more importantly, works for a congregational crowd of non-musicians to comfortably sing along. We don't always get it right so we understand that sometimes we need to make adjustments and we won't be upset at all if we have to change a key.

Instrumentalists, it's absolutely crucial that you begin teaching yourself the basics of the Nashville Number System and music theory. The advantage of learning the number system lies in it's flexibility to adjust keys on the fly without causing you to completely collapse from

a heart attack or mild stroke. We will provide you with the necessary tools to help you learn this system but it's going to be in your best interest to begin integrating this system into your weekly preparation.

9. Rehearsal Arrival

Arrive early to rehearsal. Arriving consistently at 6:55 or 7pm to rehearsal is arriving late. Come early so we can start on time. Come early so you can get yourself ready to rehearse without being rushed. Come early to connect with the other vocalists and/or musicians regarding parts in the songs. Come early to warm up your voice or your instrument.

10. Spiritual Prep

Lastly, but probably most importantly, worship and pray through the songs yourself as you prepare. Like an athlete before a big game, visualize yourself and the team leading our congregation in worship. This process will help with your nerves. Find youtube videos of others leading these songs to get inspired ahead of time as you prepare to lead them yourself. Spend time worshiping through the music on your own time and you will be amazed at how much more passionately and confidently you'll find yourself leading our congregation.