

FIRE ALARM. In Four Parts.



Bells are ring - ing, What's the mat - ter? See the smoke and hear the clat - ter; Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire! Pour on wa - ter, Pour on wa - ter.

CHAPTER XI

ORGANIZATION AND CONDUCT OF SINGINGS AND CONVENTIONS

1. An **annual singing** lasts one day and a **convention** two days or more. In another sense, a convention is an organization that sponsors singings. A **special singing** occurs only once, has a frequency other than annual, or occurs irregularly. Most **all-day singings** last from 9 or 10 a.m. to 3 or 4 p.m. Conventions, churches, or other groups sponsor **singing schools**, where one can learn to read music and sing from the *Sacred Harp*.

2. Although the proceedings at singings tend to be informal, there is a formal structure of officers and committees, and the minutes of singings are usually published.

3. The singers sit in rows of pews or chairs that face to the center of a hollow square. To the immediate left and right of the tenors are the basses and trebles, respectively. The altos face the tenors.

4. A session begins with a call to order by the chairman, who leads a selection, calls upon the chaplain (or another) for an opening prayer, makes welcoming remarks, and presides over the election of new officers. Typically, officers include chairman, vice chairman, secretary, treasurer, and chaplain. Arranging and memorial committees, and sometimes others, such as finance, hospitality, and resolutions committees, are appointed by the chairman.

5. The chairman calls the group to order after each recess and generally presides. The vice chairman may replace the chairman, at the discretion of the chairman or if the chairman is absent. The secretary keeps the minutes, which include a brief description of the proceedings, a list of leaders and the page numbers of the pieces led, and reports of committees. The treasurer collects donations, the main purpose of which, usually, is to cover the expense of having the minutes printed. The offices of secretary and treasurer are sometimes combined. The chaplain may be called on to lead in prayer at opening, dinner, and closing. The arranging committee identifies leaders and calls on them to lead, often giving notice to the next leader as well. The memorial committee identifies

those who have died since the last meeting (and sometimes others) and formulates a memorial lesson and report. The locating committee determines the location of the next session of the body. The resolutions committee drafts resolutions.

6. When called, the leader steps into the hollow square, faces the tenor section, and announces the page number of his or her selection ("159," or "number 45 top," or "EASTER ANTHEM, page 236"). Others may repeat the page number so that all may hear it correctly. After everyone has a chance to find the page, the leader or other designated person sounds the pitches of the tonic and others, possibly the dyad or triad built on the tonic or the opening notes of all of the parts. The leader commences after the singers have had time to find their pitches. The notes (syllables Fa, Sol, La, and Mi) are sung first, then the words of one or more verses. At many singings, a leader is allotted two songs, but this depends on the time available and the number of leaders present. After finishing ("teaching a lesson"), the leader retires to his or her regular seat, making way for a new leader.

7. A recess of five minutes or more is taken every hour or so. After a recess, the chairman or vice chairman calls the singers ("class") back by standing in the hollow square, calling a number, and leading it. Those who are not in their seats hear the singing and soon take their places.

8. At the memorial lesson, usually just before lunch, the chairman of the memorial committee may make remarks, read the names of the deceased, and lead songs in their memory. These duties may be shared with others.

9. Where circumstances permit, dinner on the grounds is from 12 noon to 1 p.m. There is a blessing by the chaplain or another, after which all help themselves from a long table. Usually, the food is provided by local people, often by members of the host church or community.

10. HOLY MANNA (59) and PARTING HAND (62) are often, but by no means always, used as opening and closing songs.