Lesson Transcripts for

The New LDS Organist

A Guide through the First Months

This course of twelve lessons is designed to help pianists adapt their skills to the organ as soon as possible. Lessons 1-5 and 10-12 are for everyone—those who must begin very soon to play for church meetings might consider themselves in “shortcut mode” and skip lessons 6-9. These four lessons are for those who can spend the time required to refine their playing “in polish mode” before beginning to serve as an organist.

All twelve lessons are available free over the Internet as audio podcasts. There is a total of just over four hours of instruction, with each lesson lasting between five and thirty-five minutes plus pause time. The lessons involve listening to instruction, trying out new skills at the organ, and playing simplified hymns. Organists with MP3 players can download the podcasts from iTunes and take the lessons at the organ console. Those without MP3 players can hear the lessons through their computer. Those without computers can print the lessons and study them in written form.

A packet of supporting written materials can also be downloaded free over the Internet (in Adobe pdf format). In addition to the many useful handouts, the packet contains over twenty-five simplified hymns that can be used in those first weeks of service.

Instructions on how to access the course can be found online at <www.organ.byu.edu>. Those who are already familiar with iTunes can simply search for “new lds organist” and download it as usual.

The lesson titles are listed below. For a more detailed list of subtopics, visit <www.organ.byu.edu>.

The New LDS Organist

Lesson Titles

1. Welcome to Organ Playing! (35 minutes)
2. First Steps in Pedal Playing (13 min.)
3. Playing Prelude Music that Invites the Spirit (13 min.)
4. Effective Hymn Playing—An Overview (11 min.)
5. Hymn Playing in Shortcut Mode—Playing Hymns Right Now (5 min.)
   (lessons 6-9 are for those who can dedicate the time to learning to play in “polish mode”):
   7. Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Two Independent Legato Lines (28 min.)
   8. Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Three Independent Legato Lines (31 min.)
   9. Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Four Independent Legato Lines (38 min.)
10. Hymn Playing—Deciding When to Tie Repeated Notes (25 min.)
11. Playing Postlude Music Appropriately (17 min.)
12. Continuing Your Organ Training (15 min.)

The New LDS Organist was produced by Dr. Don Cook of the Brigham Young University School of Music, assisted by graduate students Jane Dye, Ruth Eldredge, and Shinji Inagi.

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This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 1: Welcome to Organ Playing!

If possible, later in this lesson it will be best to be seated at the organ console. You should have the written materials for this lesson at your fingertips.

I am Dr. Don Cook from Brigham Young University. Let me take this opportunity to welcome you to the fascinating world of organ playing. Whether or not you feel well prepared to serve as a church organist, this course will provide tools that will help you to gain the confidence you need. And even though it is just an introductory course, our main goal extends beyond stops, pedals, and hymns. We want to help you catch the vision of the organ world that will lead to a lifetime of fascination, learning, and service as an organist.

This first lesson will introduce a wide range of topics:
1. challenges facing pianists who are new to the organ
2. choosing between polish mode and shortcut mode
3. making the most of this course
4. an introduction to the organ console
5. the backbone sounds of the organ
6. learning a simplified three-part hymn

First of all, how much musical background is needed before beginning organ training? If you have been called as an organist, you probably have some piano background. Because this course is about transferring skills from the piano to the organ, we assume that you can all ready read notes well—that is, to the level of playing the hymns at the piano. If you cannot yet read music to that level, you will need to learn to do so before completing this course. If you can play the hymns with both hands but it takes you a long time to learn one, this course will help you to begin using your skills in service. But if you can continue taking piano or organ lessons, you will progress much faster.

[Challenges facing pianists who are new to the organ]

Even if you are a very accomplished pianist, getting started with organ playing is challenging! Although the arrangement of the keys on the organ and piano is similar, that is where the similarities stop. There are multiple keyboards to deal with, you need to play keys with your feet, a large collection of sounds must be combined effectively, and there is no sustaining pedal on the organ. And most challenging of all: you probably have less time to learn the hymns, prelude, and postlude music than you would like.

This course is designed to help you meet every one of these challenges, and to begin playing in the church service within a few weeks.

[Choosing between polish mode and shortcut mode]
Here is the key to accomplishing this: for each hymn or piece that you need to play, see that it is chosen very carefully, and then decide whether to take the time to “polish” it thoroughly, or to use a quicker “shortcut” approach. We will call these two approaches “polish mode” and “shortcut mode.”

By “polish mode,” we mean playing legato (that is, smoothly), with true independence of line (that is, breaks in one line do not cause breaks in other lines). This is rather easy when playing only a single soprano line, because no independence of line is required. But it poses a far greater challenge when an alto, tenor, and/or bass line is added, requiring independence between them.

The following examples present the first two phrases of a hymn played in polish mode: first, with the soprano line only; second, with soprano and a single arranged lower part; third, in a simplified three-part arrangement; and finally, in the normal arrangement—with soprano, alto, and tenor on the Great manual and the bass in the pedal.

***High on the Mountain Top (q=72), first two phrases, soprano line only

***High on the Mountain Top, first two phrases, soprano and a single arranged lower part

***High on the Mountain Top, first two phrases, in a simplified three-part arrangement

***High on the Mountain Top, first two phrases, in the normal arrangement (that is, with soprano, alto, and tenor on the Great manual and the bass in the pedal)

Playing your first four-part hymn in polish mode will offer a challenge—even if you have advanced piano skills. To be able to play prelude, three or four four-part hymns, and postlude in polish mode every week is a goal that may take many weeks or months to achieve. So this course suggests a two-mode plan:

1. Polish mode. As you build up your ability to play four-part hymns in polish mode (which will take some time), for some of the hymns you need to play for services, learn simplified forms and versions to play in polish mode. Some of these simplified forms and versions will be presented throughout the course. Add the four-part hymns to your repertoire list as you learn them in polish mode.

2. Shortcut mode. In addition to learning some simplified forms and versions in polish mode, play some hymns and pieces in “shortcut mode.” This means playing hymns in some form as well as you can, taking shortcuts through the normal path that leads towards polished playing. Shortcuts usually involve compromises in legato and independence of line. For example, listen to a comparison of the hymn played earlier, first in polish mode, and then in shortcut mode.

** High on the Mountain Top, normal arrangement, first two phrases, in polish mode

** Now in shortcut mode. Notice that there is no pedal part, some notes in the tenor are left out, and that some repeated notes are not repeated clearly

Shortcut mode is what most pianists will use who have not had the benefit of organ training over time. It can satisfy the need to lead the congregation, and can set a spiritual tone before and after the service. However, refining the approach with lines that are more flowing, legato, and independent between one another can add much towards the beauty of a hymn or organ piece.

Balancing your work between shortcut and polish mode is an important key to peace of mind in your service as organist. Feel good about using shortcuts whenever they are necessary. And yes, they will be necessary whenever you cannot devote enough time to polishing your pieces and hymns for Sunday
services. But if you establish a habit of developing your skills in polish mode over a period of time, it will gradually become easier. You can establish this habit by setting a goal to play a hymn in polish mode on a certain date, and then by devoting a portion of every practice session to achieving that goal.

Here is an example. If you need to play for the service next week, you might prepare one hymn in a simplified arrangement in polish mode, play that same arrangement as part of your prelude with a softer stop combination, and play the rest of the hymns, the prelude, and the postlude in shortcut mode. Or, if you have four weeks to practice before you need to play next for a service, you might prepare one hymn in the normal arrangement in polish mode, two simplified hymns in the polish mode, and repeat these hymns with softer stop combinations for prelude and postlude. If, as the time draws near, you feel that you may not be ready in time to play in polish mode, take whatever shortcuts are necessary to help lead the congregation in worship. Then play with the Spirit and with confidence, and you will make a positive contribution.

If your piano playing abilities are limited, for now choose easier hymns, easier forms and arrangements of the hymns, and easier pieces. Playing something easy with confidence and with beautiful phrasing contributes more to worship than playing something more complicated and having trouble getting through the notes. This is true even for those with advanced piano skills, or with years of experience playing the organ in shortcut mode. Learning to feel satisfaction in polishing the small things takes humility, but that is what leads to mastery over the richer, more complex masterworks of hymns and organ literature.

[Making the most of this course]

Let us now shift our attention to how you might make the most of this course. It consists of twelve lessons, this “welcome lesson” being the first. Lessons two through five cover some other very important topics:

- Lesson 2: First steps in pedal playing
- Lesson 3: Playing prelude music that invites the spirit
- Lesson 4: Effective hymn playing—an overview
- and Lesson 5: Hymn playing in shortcut mode—playing hymns right now.

Every LDS organist needs to know the concepts taught in lessons two through five, even if they have only limited time to spend in practice. It is highly recommended that you work through them in order, learning each concept thoroughly.

After lesson 5, if you are pressed for time and need to rely mostly on shortcut skills for now, you can skip lessons 6 through 9 and go directly to 10. Lessons 10-12 are also for everyone:

- Lesson 10: Hymn playing—deciding when to tie repeated notes
- Lesson 11: Playing postlude music appropriately
- and Lesson 12: Continuing your organ training

If you plan on spending the time needed to polish your hymn playing skills, you should work through lessons 6 through 9, which go through an approach to “Hymn playing in polish mode”:

- Lesson 6: Playing single lines in legato style
- Lesson 7: Playing two independent legato lines
- Lesson 8: Playing three independent legato lines
- and Lesson 9: Playing four independent legato lines
Each of these four lessons builds on the previous, so you need to take enough time to master each one before proceeding to the next. You can study lessons 10-12 at the same time you are working through these lessons.

To make the most of the course, whether you lean in the polish or shortcut direction, your most important commitment would be a spiritual one. Commit yourself to magnifying your calling as organist. Pray often for any guidance that would lead to success in the most important facet of your calling: inviting the spirit of worship through your music. Pray for guidance as you plan and prepare, as you try to balance polish and shortcuts, and for the ability to do your best as you serve. Make the Lord your companion. You might also study some of the items on the “About Your Calling” study list, which indicates scriptural references, general conference addresses, and other items from priesthood channels that might provide direction and inspiration.

In addition to spiritual direction, seek the guidance of someone from your ward or stake who can help you through the course. This person could help to assure that that this training fits the needs and desires of your local leadership—a very important adjustment that can only be made in your ward or stake. Ideally this person would be a trained organist with the spiritual perspectives described earlier. If such a person is not available, a non-organist who understands music and worship can also provide valuable insights—a family member, priesthood leader, pianist, or music director, for example. If this person could meet with you from time to time to hear what you are learning, answer questions, and provide feedback, your practice and study time could be spent more wisely.

Once you have resolved to use this course as one means of magnifying your calling, scheduling a practice session at least three days per week will get you off to a good start. Honor your scheduled practice time by making whatever arrangements you can to remove distractions. If something makes it impossible to practice one day, make it a higher priority for the following day.

[An introduction to the organ console]

Now, be seated at the organ bench and let’s get acquainted with the organ console. Please feel free to stop and start this lesson whenever you need extra time to carry out the tasks as they are described.

First, find the pages for this lesson titled “The Organ Console” and “Nearer, My God, to Thee (simplified 3-part version),” and place them where you can refer to them easily. Also, if the manufacturer’s manual for the organ is nearby, take it out in case you need to refer to it.

Prepare the organ to play by turning it on, setting the volume, and clearing the stops. Find the power switch for the organ and turn it on. This is usually a button or switch to the left or right of the keyboards, but it could be some other switching device such as a key. If you cannot find the power switch, ask for help from someone who plays that organ regularly, or refer to the owner’s manual.

The volume of the organ is usually controlled by a large “expression pedal” (also called a “balanced pedal”) located above the center-most e and f of the pedal keys. It is probably labeled “Swell” or “Expression.” Place your foot flat on this “Swell pedal” and push your toe forward until the pedal stops. This is the fully opened position of this Swell pedal, and the pedal should remain in this position unless you need to reduce the volume of the organ. If there is another pedal to the left of the Swell pedal, open it also. If there is a pedal to the right of the Swell pedal, often marked “Crescendo” or “Cresc,” close it fully by placing your foot flat on it, and then by pressing the heel forward and bringing the toe back. These are the normal positions of these expression and crescendo pedals—expression pedals fully opened, and crescendo pedal fully closed.
The typical LDS ward or stake model organ has two keyboards to be played by the hands, called “manuals,” and one to be played by the feet, called “the Pedals” or simply “the Pedal.” The main manual on a two-manual organ is the lower one—the one closest to you—called “the Great.”

Below the Great to the extreme right is a button or “thumb piston” label with a “zero” or the word “cancel.” This is the “cancel button.” Press the cancel button with your right thumb to clear or “retire” any stops that may remain from the organ’s previous use.

[The backbone sounds of the organ]

To the Great manual are assigned the sounds or “stops” that are considered the “backbone” of the organ—those with the most foundational tone—called “principals” or “diapasons.” Take a moment to find the stops of your organ that are grouped under the label “Great.” These stop controls may be “rocker tabs” or “stop tabs” located directly in front of you above the two manuals, or possibly “stop knobs” or “drawknobs” located to your right and left. The group of stops under the label “Great” makes up what is called the “Great division” or “Great organ.” In a pipe organ case, the Great pipes are usually located towards the front and rather high. Most of its pipes are usually situated out where they can be seen.

Now find the Great stop labeled “Principal 8,” “Diapason 8,” or “something else 8.” Make that stop playable on the Great manual (that is, “engage it,” or “pull it”) by pressing on the bottom of it (if it is a rocker tab), by pressing it down (if it is a stop tab), or by pulling it towards you (if it is a drawknob). Engaging or “pulling” this stop makes an entire set of 61 pipes (one for each of the 61 keys) playable on the Great manual.

[Learning a simplified three-part hymn in polish mode]

Now play the right-hand part of the included arrangement of “Nearer, My God, to Thee” on the Great, listening for a smooth legato line. Make well-defined breaks only under two conditions: 1-wherever the same note is repeated, and 2-wherever a phrase break should occur. It should sound something like this:

***Nearer, My God, to Thee (q=86), simplified three-part version, right-hand part only

You have just heard a most important stop on the organ—the Principal 8 or Diapason 8. It serves as the foundation for most hymn playing for congregational accompaniment, and for many other uses. Its medium tone is rich and strong. Although most of the other “families” of organ tone imitate some instrument of the orchestra, the “principal” family is unique to the organ. Get very familiar with the sound of this stop by using it often.

Now build on your principal foundation by adding another stop on the Great division: Octave (Oktav) 4. Play the right-hand part of the hymn again, still on the Great, noting that the sound becomes stronger and brighter when this stop is added:

***Nearer, My God, to Thee, first 2 lines, simplified three-part version, right-hand part only

Now play the left-hand part of the hymn on the Great, listening for a smooth, legato line:

***Nearer, My God, to Thee, simplified three-part version, left-hand part only
Next, locate the stops of the Pedal division, and identify the Pedal stop labeled “Principal 16,” “Bourdon 16,” “Gedeckt 16,” or “something else 16.” Make that stop playable in the Pedal. Engaging or “pulling” this stop makes an entire pedal set of 32 pipes (one for each of the 32 pedal keys) playable in the Pedals. To this add the Pedal stop labeled “Principal 8,” “Octave 8,” or “something else 8.”

Prepare your feet to play the two pedal keys required in this simplified arrangement of “Nearer, My God, to Thee.” Use whatever shoes you are wearing, as long as the soles are clean. Prepare the ball of the right foot over the f just underneath the Swell expression pedal, and the ball of the left foot over the centermost c of the Pedals. To set them in position, tip or rock the feet slightly inward toward the ball of each foot, place the hands on the bench to either side of you, and play the pedal part of the hymn. Be sure to count “1, 2, 3, 4” as you play through the long notes, listening for a smooth legato line, with well-defined breaks wherever the same note is repeated, and wherever a phrase break should occur. That means that in verse 1 you should make breaks in the pedal line at the end of measures 2, 4, 8, 10, 12, and 14.

***Nearer, My God, to Thee, simplified three-part version, pedal part only.

You have just played all three lines one at a time from the simplified three-part arrangement of this hymn. Using the stops that you have pulled, and combining the three parts together confidently, this arrangement could be used to accompany the congregation in polish mode. The congregation could sing either in unison or in parts, as the harmony is compatible with the original four-part version. To play in polish mode would mean that all three lines would be played legato; that any break in one line would not cause a break in another line where it should be played legato; and that any smoothness in one line would not cause a tie in another line where a break should occur.

To learn to play this or any three-part hymn in polish mode as just described, use the following steps in practice:

1. Focus on a single four-measure phrase.
2. Polish each part individually, listening carefully for perfect legato except where well-defined breaks should occur. (To “polish” means to learn each step until you can play it perfectly at your “goal” tempo several times in a row.) Play slowly enough to stay in control, gradually increasing tempo toward your goal only as you are able.
3. Polish all combinations of two parts (right and left, right and pedal, left and pedal), listening carefully for the integrity of each line (that is, perfect legato except where well-defined breaks should occur). Remember to always practice slowly enough to stay in control, gradually increasing tempo toward your goal only as you are able.
4. Polish all three parts in combination (right, left, and pedal), listening carefully for the integrity of each line. Practice very slowly at first, and always in control.
5. Repeat this process for each four-measure phrase, reviewing previously-learned phrases along the way.
6. Put the learned phrases together when able, reviewing any step as needed. Always listen for the integrity of each line (that is, perfect legato except where well-defined breaks should occur).

[The combination action]

Let’s turn now to the combination action. At some point as you practice, you may want to begin saving or storing combinations of stops for later recall by using the organ’s “combination action.” The main parts of the combination action are:
1. buttons called “thumb pistons” underneath the Swell and Great manuals numbered commonly from 1 to 5, 6, or 10. These “combination pistons” or “presets” are of two main types: “divisionals” and “generals.” “Divisionals” (also called “locals”) can save combinations only for the manual underneath which they are located. If present, they are numbered 1-5 or so under each manual. “Generals” can save combinations that involve all divisions of the organ. If divisionals are present, they will be centered under each manual and the generals will be located to the left of the divisionals. If divisionals are not present, the generals will be centered.

Take a moment now to locate each of the following on your organ:
--the general combination pistons (or “presets”)
--the divisional combination pistons (or “locals”), if they are present, for the Great, Swell, and Pedal (Pedal divisionals usually appear to the right as thumb pistons under the Great manual, or as toe studs)

2. Another part of the combination action is the “setter,” usually a thumb piston located to the left underneath the Great or sometimes the Swell manual, or possibly a key and lock located to the left or right of the manuals. If there is no set button or key lock, it is likely that the combination pistons or presets are set by the factory and cannot be changed by the user.

Take a moment now to locate the “set” button or key lock, if one is present.

3. Also part of the combination action are the “toe studs.” Toe studs, if present, are located to either side of the expression pedals, and perform various functions. Often the toe studs to the left are duplicates of general combination pistons, and the toe studs to the right may include a Great to Pedal reversible, pedal divisionals, and/or a tutti reversible. A “reversible” (such as the “tutti reversible”) perform a pre-determined function when pressed once (such as turning on most stops of the organ in the background), and when pressed again, that function is reversed (such as turning off those stops, leaving only the stops that had been engaged before the tutti reversible was pressed).

Take a moment now to locate all of the following, if they are present:
--the toe studs. Note whether they are generals or pedal divisionals
--the tutti or sforzando reversible. Note whether it is present as a thumb piston, a toe stud, or both
--the Great to Pedal reversible—not the Great to Pedal stop, but the reversible that operates the stop.

4. Central to the combination action are “memory level” selectors. Memory level selectors are thumb pistons labeled “M1, M2, etc.” or “A, B, C, etc.”, or some other device for selecting memory levels that may be explained in your instruction manual. Multiple memory levels are most common in later model organs. Each memory level holds one “bank” of general and local combination pistons. If there are ten total generals, and five divisionals on each division, each memory level allows those pistons to be set again on each level. So an organ with four memory levels and ten generals has the potential to store forty general combinations.

Take a moment now to locate the memory level selectors, whether they are thumb pistons or some other device (such as arrow buttons located in a drawer to your left)

It is likely that other organs in your building are all ready using the combination action—even depending on it. So before changing what all ready has been stored, be certain that you are authorized to make changes, and be careful not to change combinations on memory levels that are needed by other
organists. Ideally each organist might be authorized to store combinations on at least a portion of the organ’s combination action.

To store or “set” your combination:
1. engage a combination of stops that you wish to set
2. press and hold the set button with your left thumb (or turn the key to the “unlock” position)
3. while holding the set button, press a general or divisional preset and then release both
4. test your combination by pressing cancel to clear the stops, and then press the same preset that you used in step 3. If your combination does not appear, it is likely that you released the set button too soon. Go through the steps again, following the instructions carefully!

[Some general advice]

Before concluding the lesson, here is some general advice. The immediate demands of your calling, such as learning the hymns, prelude, and postlude music for the next Sunday, will tend to climb to the top of your priority list during every practice session. Learning a lot of music in a short time will probably force you to use many shortcuts during the first few months. To protect yourself from establishing a lifelong habit of playing in “shortcut mode,” plan to make real progress at least in the long term by making these three commitments:

1. **Polish too.** Commit some time during every practice session towards polishing something. Even if you dedicate just fifteen minutes towards polishing a hymn every time you practice, and even if it takes weeks or months to polish that hymn, you will have something of real value when it is finished. *You will also develop good habits that will eventually replace the need for shortcuts.* Polishing the next hymn will be easier, and the next even easier. Taking the time to polish in this manner is one important way to magnify your calling.

2. **Be content.** Prepare well as was just described, and then commit yourself to feeling content with the best preparation that your available time will permit. You will not be able to apply all of the new skills you learn to every hymn that you need to play, so don’t feel bad about it! Balancing your work in shortcut mode by always working towards polishing something should give you a good feeling inside. Certainly the leadership, the congregation, and the Lord will be pleased with your best efforts—so join them!

3. **Continue organ study.** As a part of your calling, continue organ study in some form after finishing this course. The last lesson of the course describes many possible ways to do this. First, commit yourself to completing this course. When it is finished, commit to continue with one form of formal study. This is another important way to magnify your calling.

In summary, this has been The New LDS Organist, Lesson 1: Welcome to Organ Playing! Make sure that you understand each of these topics as I mention them, and review them if needed. The most important differences between the piano and organ have been pointed out, which result in new ways to listen and to play. You were advised with each hymn or piece to choose between playing in shortcut or in polish mode, and you were encouraged to balance your work in those two modes. This twelve-lesson course was outlined, with lessons 6-9 indicated for those who will be working in polish mode. Making the most of this course involves spiritual perspectives as well as diligent practice, and you were strongly encouraged to pursue both avenues. You were introduced to the organ console: the power switch, the expression and crescendo pedals, the Great, Swell, and Pedal divisions and manuals, some principal stops, and the combination action. You learned the steps to polishing three-part hymns. You were given three specific challenges as you go through the course: Polish too, be content, and continue organ study.

Follow up with this lesson by learning to play the simplified three-part arrangement of “Nearer My God, to Thee” in polish mode, following the steps that were given.
Lesson 2 is next, “First steps in pedal playing.” You will learn some important ways to play the pedal keys without having to look down, some very useful pedal techniques, and pedaling symbols. As with lesson 1, it is best to be seated at the organ console as you work through lesson 2.

Happy practicing!
Lesson 2: First Steps in Pedal Playing

This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 2: First Steps in Pedal Playing. My name is Ruth Eldredge, representing the Organ Area of the Brigham Young University School of Music.

This lesson will address the basics of positioning yourself at the organ, playing the pedals, and registering hymns for clarity.

[The feet and the pedalboard]

Your feet are important to playing the organ. They control volume with the expression pedals and also play musical lines along with your hands. The pedal line provides stability to your organ playing and supports the congregation as they sing. The keyboard located on the floor underneath your organ manuals is called the pedalboard, the pedals, or the pedal for short. Also notice any expression pedals and crescendo pedals on your organ. These control the volume.

In organ music, the pedal notes often have their own staff which is placed underneath the manual staves. Notice that the pedal line is notated in bass clef. When you find the music written on only two staves, as it is in the hymnal, the bottom note or bass line is generally played on the pedals. First we will discuss how to sit comfortably at the organ, listen for and play a legato line with your feet, and decide how to mark and learn music for manual and pedal together.

As you can see, the pedalboard has a large range of notes. To orient yourself, remember that the lowest C on the pedal is the same pitch as the lowest C on the manual.

[Organ shoes]

Proper shoes are essential to playing a pedal line with comfort and accuracy. They help the foot to maintain proper positioning on the pedalboard and to achieve accuracy while maintaining a perfect legato. Organ shoes need not be expensive, but they should be worn only to play the organ to protect both the shoes and the organ from wear and dirt. As you decide on an organ shoe, look for these characteristics:

1. Heel – Find a shoe that has a heel about one inch in height. It should be moderately wide and able to slide up and down the keys without leaving marks.
2. Uppers – Find a shoe that has a flexible upper material and that fits snugly on your foot. Your shoes should slide against each other without sticking.
3. Arch – Find a shoe that has a space between the heel and sole. This allows the foot to straddle from C to E for example, without hitting the D between them.
4. Sole – The sole should be thin and should slide easily up and down the keys. It should not extend beyond the width of the shoe.
When you sit at the organ, consider your position relative to the pedals first. Center your body on the bench slightly left of the center of the pedal. On most organs, this means to center on the pedal note D. Move your body forward so that you can easily push down the expression pedal with your right foot. Then, move the bench forward enough so that you are well supported in this position. Realize that your bench will be closer to the organ than what you are accustomed to at the piano. If possible, adjust the height of the bench so that your toes and heels gently rest on the pedalboard.

As you play the pedal, focus on playing the natural keys with your toes just clear of the sharp keys. When your feet are close together, place one heel in the arch of the other foot. Maintain this contact whenever possible. When you need to reach larger intervals, keep your heels in contact for as long as you can. This will give you a reference system to help you find the notes without having to look down.

Now that you are sitting at the organ, look for a moment at the stops. The stops are grouped into divisions, labeled “Great,” “Swell,” and “Pedal.”

Notice that most of the individual stops have numbers on them. This number is called the “pitch designation,” and it refers to the pitch that will sound on the manual while that stop is engaged. To illustrate, find a stop on the Great division labeled with an 8. This is called and “eight foot stop.” Engage it and then play the middle C on the Great manual. Notice the sound it makes. This note is the same as middle C on a piano. Now retire that stop (meaning turn it off), and pull a four-foot stop on that same division. Play the same note you just played and notice the difference in the sound. The pitch you hear is one octave higher than the one you heard previously. Now retire the four-foot stop and find a stop marked 2’ on the same manual. Play the same C again. This pitch is two octaves higher than the first pitch you played and one octave higher than the second one you played.

Now find your Pedal division and pull a 16’ stop. Play the highest C on the pedalboard. This is Middle C.

Several stops can be combined to form basic “organ” sounds. To illustrate this, cancel all of your stops, and engage the following stops: on the pedal division, find and activate the Principal 16’ and 8’ stops. These may be labeled “principal,” or “octave” on your organ. On the Great manual, activate the Principal 8’, 4’, and 2’ stops. Again, these may be labeled “Principal,” “Octave,” or “Super Octave.” This combination of stops is called a principal chorus. The principal chorus provides a clear sound that is easy for singers to follow. Play notes on the pedal and manual to hear the sound of the principal chorus combination. It will sound like this:

***

Now return your attention to the pedalboard. Pedal notes are easiest to play with your toes. Take out the Pedal Orientation Sheet and look at exercise one. Notice the carats or upside-down V’s placed above or below the noteheads. These carats are called pedal markings: a carat placed above the note tells you to
play with your right toe, a carat placed below the note tells you to play with your left toe. Later, you will see small circles also placed above and below the noteheads which tell you to play the notes with your heel.

Paying attention to the toe marking, place one toe on each note of the exercise and prepare to play the line using only your toes. First, follow along as I play it.

***

Now stop the recording and practice yourself, paying close attention to pedal markings and note values.

[Playing legato lines with alternate toes]

Now that you can accurately play exercise one, move to exercise two, where you will learn to play legato pedal phrases with your toes. Listen for a smooth connection between notes as you play these exercises. Be careful that the sounding notes neither overlap nor detach as you move from one to the other. Follow this exercise as I play it.

***

Place your hands on the bench or in your lap as you learn these exercises. Pay attention to the pedal markings and avoid looking at your feet as much as possible. Stop the recording and start it again when you can play the exercise accurately.

[Playing legato lines with alternate toes and heels]

Here you will learn to play legato pedal phrases with your toes and heels. Remember that organ shoes will be very helpful in achieving fluency in pedal playing, especially when playing with your heels. Place your right toe on E and your right heel on the D next to it. Practice rocking from toe to heel to allow the notes to sound one after the other. As you do so, listen for a perfect legato by using your ankle to make the motion and keeping your knees still.

Move to exercise three. Notice the pedal markings. Remember that markings above the note mean to play with your right foot, and markings below the notes mean to play with your left foot. Carats mean to play with your toe, and circles mean to play with your heels. Keeping your heel and arch in contact as much as possible, practice the exercises slowly enough for note-perfect playing. Increase the tempo gradually as you become more comfortable. Your practiced exercise will sound something like this:

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[Combining hands and feet]

Now that you are oriented to the pedalboard, you can begin to combine your hands and feet. As you practice, learn the pedal line first, following the pedal marks as much as possible. When you have mastered the pedal line alone, practice the left hand and pedal line together, the right hand and pedal line together, and then the left hand and right hand together. Once you can play these two-part combinations with few errors and no hesitations, combine all three parts. Use this method as a practice model throughout your organ playing experience.
Playing the pedals is like learning a new instrument - it requires consistent practice, and is rewarding as your pedal skills improve. Do not give up playing the pedals if the exercises take time to master. Pedal use in hymn playing provides a strong foundation for the sound of the organ that will help your congregation to sing more confidently. As you polish your pedal playing remember these steps:

1. Practice the pedal line first, then your two-part combinations: left hand and pedal, right hand and pedal, and left and right hands together, no pedal. Play all three together after you are comfortable with these combinations.
2. Follow the pedal markings printed in your music as closely as possible. Where there are no markings, plan ahead and mark in the smoothest pedal for you.
3. Use the toe as much as possible. It is easier to play with the toe than with the heel.
4. Listen for a legato line in your pedal playing, as if someone were singing the line. You may wish to sing along with your pedal practicing to help you identify the legato sound.
5. Use the exercises regularly as warm-ups or “polishers” as you continue your organ study.

Correct pedal playing takes practice. Remember that you are learning a new instrument. It requires the feet to work independently in a new way. Consistent practice will help overcome hurdles that may arise, and will be a positive experience as you perfect your pedal skills. The use of pedals in hymn playing creates a strong foundation that will help the congregation sing more confidently.

At the end of this lesson, you should be able to position yourself comfortably at the organ, identify and use a principal chorus, find a proper organ shoe, and mark and play basic pedal lines. Continue to practice the exercises given and find other pedal lines in your hymnal to practice alone and with one or two hands.

In the next lesson you will learn about playing hymns effectively in your services.
Lesson 3: Playing Prelude Music that Invites the Spirit

A podcast by Jane Dye, Brigham Young University
See www.organ.byu.edu

Materials needed: Resources: Prelude and Postlude; Common Stop Names Listed by Family

Now that you are acquainted with the organ console, its principal sound, and the basic skills in pedal playing, you are ready for The New LDS Organist Lesson 3: Playing Prelude Music that Invites the Spirit. My name is Jane Dye, representing the Organ Area of the Brigham Young University School of Music.

If possible, in a few minutes it will be best to be seated at the organ console. You should have the written materials for this lesson at your fingertips.

[Exploring statements in the Church Handbook pertinent to prelude music]

The Music section of the Church Handbook of Instructions states that “quiet prelude and postlude music creates an atmosphere of worship that invites the Spirit into Church meetings,” and that the “careful selection and proper performance of music can greatly enhance the spirit of worship.” This suggests that there will be an element of work and preparation. The Handbook gives further guidelines and counsel for which we are responsible. Among these are three important guidelines:

1. Hymns are encouraged for prelude and postlude music. If other musical selections are used, they should be in keeping with the spirit of the hymns of the Church. The text should be doctrinally correct.

2. “Music in Church meetings should help members worship, feel the sacred spirit of the Sabbath, and feel the spirit of revelation. This music should not draw attention to itself or be for demonstration.”

3. “Some religiously oriented music in a popular style is not appropriate for sacrament meetings. . . . Also, much sacred music that is suitable for concerts and recitals is not appropriate for a Latter-day Saint worship service.”

Within these guidelines, the organist may also choose music specific to special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, Pioneer Day, Priesthood Commemoration, Father’s and Mother’s Day, the Fourth of July, or President’s Day. Sacred Primary songs may also be used as prelude music on these and other occasions.

You may ask, “Where do I get prelude music?” You will need to start building your own library of music books, but for now, use those that you have and borrow music from other organists. Play through them and decide which one’s you’d like to purchase for yourself. Included with this lesson is a list of a few books that are minimally priced to help you get started. You can also choose playable, quieter hymns from our Hymnbook, with or without the pedals.

If you are not seated at the organ console, please do so now. Make sure that your bench is positioned low enough to let the heels gently rest on the pedals, and close enough that you can rest your entire foot on the expression pedal and remain well supported in that position.
[Registration: flutes, strings (incl. celestes), hybrids; mutations, soft solo combinations, tremulant]

You have been introduced to the foundational sound of the organ, the Principal, or Diapason. There are three other categories or “families of organ tone”; the flutes, strings, and reeds. As an organist, you will become like a conductor of an orchestra that calls upon these sounds when needed. It is exciting to explore the many possibilities of combined sounds. While experimentation is necessary, there are also fundamental guidelines to follow in creating the right sounds for preludes, hymn playing, and postludes that apply to all organs. These guidelines will be presented a little at a time throughout this course. For now, let’s examine the tone colors of the flute, string, and reed families.

Flute tone is clearer, quieter than, and less direct than principal tone. Flute tone is of medium strength. When a flute is combined with a principal, it adds warmth and broadening to the rich, strong principal tone. Some flutes also combine nicely with other flutes, strings, and hybrids. Like the various flutes and piccolos in an orchestra, some have the brighter tones like that of a metal flute, while others have a hollow wood sound like that of an Indian flute. Flute stops make great solo sounds for preludes when a softer accompaniment can be found. Take a moment to find the flute stops on your organ, using the “Families of Organ Tones” page that comes with this lesson.

String tone is similar to what is produced on a violin or viola in an orchestra. Organ strings can produce quieter, vibrating or shimmering tones, and can even approach reedy tone. The tones are thinner, with a cutting edge, and are tones of medium to soft strength. The 8’ string stop is usually located next to or paired with a string “celeste”. The “celeste” stop is usually tuned slightly sharp, thus creating an undulating effect, imitating the warm chorus effect produced by a string orchestra. These two stops combined create a soft accompaniment background for solo stops on another manual, or can be used for quieter sections of the music with both hands on one manual. They can appear on your organ as separate stops (for example, Viola 8’ and Viola Celeste 8’) or paired together as a single compound stop indicated by the Roman numeral II (for example, Viola Celeste 8’ II). Because they are often the quietest stops of the organ, they are not heard when combined with the fiery reeds or other very large combinations. Take a moment to find the string stops on your organ, referring to the “Families of Organ Tones” page included with this lesson. Strings are usually located in the Swell division, and will be very useful in providing a meditative foundation for quiet prelude music. It would be best, however, to avoid using the string celeste for every prelude piece.

Instead of a true string, you may find a “hybrid” tone on your organ. Hybrid stopshave a the quality of more than one family of tone. The Gemshorn, for example, has basic quality of a flute, with the edge of the string. Many organ builders use this stop as their only string sound. It may be used alone, but is often used in combination with a flute or a Gemshorn Celeste. Other hybrid names that share characteristics with more than one family may include the Erzähler, Spitzflöte, or Geigen.

If there are hybrid stops on your organ, listen to them alone and in combination with other stops as described earlier. Decide where these hybrid stops could be used in your prelude music.

The reeds have a pungent and distinctive sound. Chorus reeds, such as the Trompette, Oboe, and Fagott (pronounced fuh-GOTT) bring fire to the organ sound. The stronger reeds are generally not appropriate for preludes. The stops of this family of organ tone imitate instruments from the brass and woodwind sections of the orchestra. The quieter solo reeds such as the Krummhorn, Clarinet, or English Horn can be useful on the solo line for preludes, against soft 8-foot or 8- and 4-foot accompaniments. Adding the tremulant to a solo reed can be effective if the tremulant is not too fast or deep. Adding a soft 8-foot stop to an edgy solo reed can help “round out” the tone.
See if you can identify some of these reed stops on your organ, and try the softer reeds in single-line melodies. Try them both with and without the tremulant. It is important to remember that the tremulant should never be used when playing hymns for congregational singing.

Mutation stops are those labeled with a fraction—2 2/3, 1 3/5, and 1 1/3. They are “color” sounds of the organ. When added to a flute or principal, added harmonic interest or “color” is created. These are not to be used alone, but add a new dimension of sound that gives variety to prelude selections. Some of the most common combinations are 8’ and 2 2/3’, 8’ and 2 2/3’, 8’ 2 2/3’ 1 3/5’, those three combinations with a 4’ stop added, and all five of these pitches: 8’, 4’, 2 2/3’, 2’, and 1 3/5—commonly called the “Cornet.” [pronounced “cor-NAY”] These combinations are most useful as the solo part of an organ prelude, which means that you might try adding the tremulant.

Find the mutation stops on your organ, and try using them in some of the combinations just described. Listen to them with and without the tremulant.

[Registration in prelude music]

As a reminder, as discussed in Lesson One, the expression pedals should be fully open and the crescendo pedal fully closed. Using that as a starting point, you can re-adjust the expression pedals to achieve a balance of sound between the manuals. The melody should be more prominent than the accompaniment.

Now take the handout, Registration Suggestions for Prelude Music,” and try the different combinations available with the music excerpts. Use these and other combinations to register your preludes with confidence.

[Preparing and playing prelude music]

The Church Music Handbook states that prelude music is usually played “five to ten minutes before and after a meeting.” If people arrive earlier, you may allow more time for your prelude music.

There are several ways to group the music for your prelude. It is important to use variety so that your prelude remains interesting. Our ears tire of hearing the same key, the same registration, or the same type of piece one after another. Plan the order of your prelude selections and set them on the music rack for easy transition between pieces. Do not hurry, as a reasonable amount of silence (ten or fifteen seconds) between pieces can encourage reverence in the congregation.

[Ending the prelude]

Discuss with your Priesthood leadership their preferences for starting a meeting (such as, will they stand before or after you stop the prelude). Here are five suggestions for bringing your prelude music to a close:

1. Avoid abrupt stops.
2. Time each prelude piece during your practice time, and write its length in your score. You might put shorter pieces at the end and the longer pieces at the beginning of your line-up.
3. For your last prelude piece, plan ahead of time where a cut could be placed to shorten the music. You can do this by looking for common chords at the beginning and the end of the
music. Mark these in your music. When you need to quickly close, just skip to that common chord and finish the piece, maintaining proper beats per measure.

4. Pick two short hymns. Play one verse when you think that the time to stop is near. If the priesthood leader needs a bit more time, play the second hymn, once or twice.

5. Remain calm – time is on your side. When the priesthood leaders stands, he is indicating that the meeting is about to begin. Take the time needed to find a way to close your prelude calmly and musically.

As a closing word of advice, avoid anything in your prelude music that might distract from the spirit of the meeting, or call undue attention to you or to your music. By prayerful and diligent planning and preparation, as stated in the Handbook, “careful selection and proper performance of music can greatly enhance the spirit of worship.”

You have now been introduced to the organ, you have learned the first steps in pedal playing and the basic pitches and families of organ tone, and you should have a good sense for choosing and preparing prelude music. In the next lesson you will get an overview of effective hymn playing.

Happy practicing!
Lesson 4: Effective Hymn Playing—An Overview

A podcast by Shinji Inagi, Brigham Young University
See www.organ.byu.edu

Materials needed: Hymn Registration Shortcuts; Hymns 6 and 166 (Hymnbook)

This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 4: Effective Hymn Playing—An Overview. My name is Shinji Inagi, representing the Organ Area of the Brigham Young University School of Music.

This lesson will cover working with directors, basic organ registration for hymn playing, registering for richness, and some important standards in hymn playing.

[Purpose as organists]

Before discussing effective hymn playing, let’s first consider our purpose as organists. According to the Church Handbook, it is to “invite the spirit of the Lord, create a feeling of reverence, unify us as members, and provide a way for us to offer praises to the Lord.” There are many important principles and skills that will enable you to accomplish all of the things mentioned in that statement.

[Choosing hymns]

The first step in effective hymn playing is to choose hymns that are appropriate for your ability level and for their function in the service. Normally, a ward music director receives a theme for each Sunday from the bishopric, and he or she suggests appropriate hymns for each sacrament meeting. It is essential that an organist become involved in this process, because hymns vary in difficulty, and some require more preparation time. You might consider offering your music directors a list of hymns that you would be able to play comfortably.

[The director]

Another important element in effective hymn playing is learning to work with the director. Each director conducts music differently, and the two of you must become unified as you lead the congregation. Discuss together how to set the appropriate tempo, how to cue the beginning of the hymn, the end of each verse, and the final ending of the hymn. It is essential to meet with the director regularly to go over specific issues that may determine the effectiveness of the music in the service. Some of these issues might include how to begin the introduction of the hymn, what the conducting beat pattern will be, how to deal with fermatas, and how long to rest between verses.

[Hymn registration]

Now, let’s talk about registration for congregational hymn playing. Do you remember “registration for clarity” from Lesson 2? When registering for clarity, we use only one stop per pitch. If you are building a basic “principal chorus,” you would use principal 8’, 4’, and 2’ on the Great, and principal 16’, 8’, and 4’ in the Pedal. Let’s hear how it sounds.

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As an alternative to registering for clarity, you can also register for richness. In this approach, use a "pyramid" configuration; that is, use more than one stop at the lower pitch levels. For example, you can use principal 8', flute 8', principal 4', flute 4', and principal 2'. This approach reduces the clarity of the sound, but produces a broader and warmer sound. "Richer" does not necessarily mean "louder." Listen, for example, as we compare a "clear" combination of 8’, 4’, and 2’-foot stops and a "rich" combination of 8’, 4’, and 2’-foot stops.

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Do not include celeste stops in this "pyramid" because their "fuzzy" character does not contribute towards a supportive organ foundation—the first goal of congregational hymn accompaniment.

O.K. now let’s register on your organ. First, build a stop combination for “clarity” on the Great. After you have done this, add some 8’ and 4’-foot stops to make the sound “richer.” Pause the lesson and build your combinations.

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Now let’s talk about some general guidelines for hymn registration. Please remember that the principal chorus is the backbone of organ sound and should be the basis for registration in congregational singing. You may add mixture stops to the principal chorus to add “brightness” to the sound. After adding a mixture stop, you may add 8’ (and possibly 4’) reeds in order to add fire to a bright principal chorus, or 8’ and light 16’ reeds to add gravity to a more foundational principal chorus. These options are commonly used for jubilant hymns.

Let’s hear some examples. I will first play with the principal chorus 8’,4’, and 2’ and then I will add a mixture for brightness.

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In this next example, I will first play with the bright principal chorus 8’,4’,2’, and mixture, and then I will add 8’ and 4’ reeds.

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Now let’s add gravity to the principal chorus. I will first play with the bright principal chorus from the last example, and then add 16’ and 8’-foot reeds.

***

Now you know how to add brightness, fire, and gravity to the principal chorus for jubilant hymns.

Let’s talk about meditative hymns. Sacrament hymns are mostly meditative hymns. In meditative hymns, stops from the flute chorus might be substituted in place of principal stops to minimize sharpness, especially at the 4’ and 2’ level.

Listen to the following example of a meditative hymn. I will first play with the principal chorus 8’,4’, and 2’, then substitute principal 4’ and 2’ with flute 4’ and 2’.

***

Now, pause the lesson, and practice building combinations for both a jubilant hymn and a meditative hymn.

***pause
The primary role of the organist in hymn playing is to support congregational singing. The flowing lines that are sung by the congregation are best supported by a smooth approach to hymn playing. For this reason, legato touch is a widely accepted standard for hymn playing. An organist who plays all four lines of a hymn in good legato style creates a solid background that inspires confidence in the singers. Specifically, if one note moves to a different note within the same voice, connect these two notes in legato style. When one note is repeated within the same voice, repeat the notes clearly and distinctly. When practicing in polish mode, plan on spending much of your practice time making this happen in all four voices independently. Be aware that many situations will arise in which some repeated notes may need to be tied in order to help the music flow in a more legato style. This is discussed in other lessons.

Finally, but very importantly, how are the four voice parts distributed between the hands and feet, and among the manuals and pedals? In the normal arrangement of parts, soprano and alto are played by the right hand and tenor is played by the left hand. The left hand occasionally plays some alto notes. Both hands are normally played on the Great manual. The feet play the bass part in the Pedal. Note that the left hand does not play the bass part, allowing the hands to focus on three legato lines instead of four.

In this lesson, you have learned how to work with directors, basic organ registration for both jubilant and meditative hymns, and some important standards in hymn playing.

In our next lesson, we will discuss Hymn Playing in Shortcut Mode—Playing Hymns Right Now.
Lesson 5: Hymn Playing in Shortcut Mode—Playing Hymns Right Now

A podcast by Ruth Eldredge, Brigham Young University
See www.organ.byu.edu
Materials needed: Hymn Registration Shortcuts; Hymn 3 (Hymnbook)

This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 5: Hymn Playing in Shortcut Mode – Playing hymns right now.

Learning to play the organ is a process which requires consistent practice over an extended time. Even if you are comfortable playing the piano, the organ is a new instrument. When you are called to play the organ you may not have enough time to acquire and polish the skills you need to learn new four-part hymns each week. Developing these skills is vital to your success in your calling, but you should be able to play confidently using the skills you already have. This course will cover two methods of learning and playing hymns. We will call the first method “shortcut mode” and the second method “polish mode.” Use both of these two modes to meet your immediate and long-term needs as organist. Work toward playing less in shortcut mode and more in polish mode.

[Shortcut mode]

Shortcut mode means to play the hymns as well as you can right now. This mode can be useful when you are asked to play a hymn beyond your current skill level, or while you are learning other hymns in polish mode. If you are playing multiple hymns for a single service, you might pick one or more hymns to learn in polish mode and learn the others in shortcut mode. This can help focus your practice time to develop your skills more quickly while still fulfilling your calling as organist. Here are several ideas for playing in shortcut mode. For each hymn you play in this mode, decide how you wish to practice and play it.

1. Play the Soprano line only.
2. Play the Soprano line in octaves.
3. Play the Soprano line and one other line (Alto, Tenor, or Bass.)
4. Play a simplified three- or four-part version of the hymn, such as the ones provided with this course.
5. Play all four voices on the Great manual.
6. Play all four voices on the Great manual with the bass coupler activated.
7. Play the Soprano, Alto, and Tenor lines on the Great, and play the Bass on the pedal. Do your best to maintain legato lines.

[Registering in shortcut mode]

To play in shortcut mode, first pick a registration appropriate to your hymn. If the hymn is joyful, pick a registration which will match that mood. A principal chorus is a basic registration for a joyful hymn. To engage the principal chorus, find the Great division and pull the stops marked “Diapason 8’, Octave 4’, Super Octave 2’, and Mixture.” This is a basic principal chorus. It gives clarity and brilliance to your
hymn. For example, a principal chorus on the hymn “Now Let Us Rejoice” sounds like this (I will play all four parts on the Great manual):

*** Now Let Us Rejoice, 1 phrase, 4 parts, no pedal

Now that you have engaged the principal chorus on your organ, stop the recording and play “Now Let Us Rejoice” in shortcut mode, with all four parts on the Great manual.

Many organs have a bass coupler, which you may use to bring out the bass line without playing it with the pedals. With the bass coupler engaged, the lowest notes you play on the manual sound with the stops you have engaged on the pedal division. To use the bass coupler, go the pedal division and pull the Principal 16’ and Octave 8’ stops. Next, find and engage the rocker tab or thumb piston marked “Bass.” It is usually situated to the right of the other stops or pistons. With the bass coupler activated, play “Now Let Us Rejoice” with all four parts on the manuals. Notice the difference in the sound of the bass line. It will sound like this:

***Now Let Us Rejoice, 1 phrase with bass coupler

In shortcut mode you may be able to play more voices than you will when you begin polish mode. However, do not stop using the polish mode just because you can play all the notes. Polish mode will help you learn to play musical lines with better clarity and confidence than you play in shortcut mode. This may mean that you play fewer lines or what appear to be simpler arrangements at first. As you do so, listen carefully for the differences in the way you play in shortcut and polish modes. For example, your “polished” hymns will have consistent legato touch, while your “shortcut” hymns may break the legato touch in order to play all of the notes.

You have now finished Lesson 5 – Hymn-playing in shortcut mode. To begin learning about polish mode, continue to lesson 6. To continue the lessons in shortcut mode, skip to lesson 10. Return to lessons 6-9 when you are ready to begin polish mode. As you learn more hymns, Remember that you can learn one hymn in shortcut mode while you are learning another in polish mode.
Lesson 6: Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Single Lines in Legato Style

A podcast by Don Cook, Brigham Young University
See www.organ.byu.edu

Materials needed: The Six Organ Fingering Techniques; Common Stop Names Listed by Family; Hymns 174 and 5 (simplified); Hymn 259 (Hymnbook)

This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 6: Hymn playing in polish mode—Playing single lines in legato style. If possible, it will be best to be seated at the organ console with the organ turned on. You should have the written materials for this lesson at your fingertips. I am Dr. Don Cook from Brigham Young University.

[Learning to play in polish mode]

Lesson six is the first of four lessons on how to play hymns in polish mode. We begin in this lesson with single lines or parts, gradually increasing to two, three, and four parts in the following lessons. You will learn how to use chorus mixtures when registering hymns and organ pieces. We also introduce the six fingering techniques, which will become useful when playing three legato lines between the two hands.

Mastering these four lessons will take some dedicated practice over a period of time. Take all the time you need to polish at least one hymn or arrangement as described in each lesson before proceeding to the next. If the demands of your calling require you to play several hymns and other appropriate music within just a few weeks, you should study lessons ten through twelve at the same time that you work carefully through lessons six through nine. You may also need to play most hymns in shortcut mode, as described thoroughly in lesson five, for the first few weeks.

Working through lessons ten through twelve alongside lessons six through nine will get you through all the course topics quicker—at the same time that you begin laying the foundation of polished organ playing. If you have plenty of time before you will need to play for a service, just work through the lessons one at a time in their normal order.

Remember that “polish mode” is playing each line legato (that is, smoothly), with true independence of line (that is, breaks in one line do not cause breaks in other lines, and sustained tone in one line does not cause a tie between notes that should be repeated in other lines). Begin learning to play in polish mode with very simple forms—mainly soprano only or soprano in octaves. Because there is only one line (the soprano), there is no need for independence of line! Instead, you can focus on listening for two other very important qualities of your music:

1. a perfect legato between the tones, avoiding both detaching or blurring the tones, and
2. well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks.

At first, because they include fingering, play the right-hand part (only) of several three-part hymn arrangements that come with this course. You can play these arrangements exactly as written, without concern for whether or not to tie some of the repeated notes. These decisions have all ready been made, and written into the arrangements.
Listen to two examples played with these two qualities intact: perfect legato between the tones, and well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks.

**174 While of These Emblems, soprano line only, on principals 8’ and 4’

Listen to the same example played again, now with occasional problems with legato and with the breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks.

**174 While of These Emblems, soprano line only, on principals 8’ and 4’, with problems as described above.

Now pull principals 8’ and 4’ on the Great, and find the arrangement of hymn 174, “While of These Emblems We Partake.” Stop the recording if you need more time to pull these stops and locate the music.

***pause

Next, get ready to echo each four-measure passage of this hymn after it is played on the recording. Follow this procedure:

1. A four-measure passage will be played—listen carefully and prepare to echo what you hear.
2. At the end of the four measures, as the recording continues in silence, repeat that passage in time, trying to imitate the quality of the breaks between the repeated notes, the legato, and the phrase breaks exactly as you hear them on the recording. If you make a mistake, try to keep going through to the end of your four measures.
3. The next four-measure passage will be played—listen carefully again.
4. Imitate the new passage as you did the first.
5. Continue in this manner until you have played all four phrases, listening carefully and imitating precisely what you hear.

**174 While of These Emblems, soprano line only, on principals 8’ and 4’, in four-measure sections as described above.

What you have just heard (and hopefully, played) is a model of one soprano line played in polish mode. The line flows in a smooth legato, and the repeated notes are clearly distinguished one from another. Also, phrase breaks occur in a way that helps to clarify the meaning of the text in verse one. Playing this hymn in this way (soprano only) with this stop combination (principals 8 and 4) would provide adequate support to help lead a congregation.

While playing a single line in this manner does not offer the rich harmony that is certainly desirable, it could help a congregation to sing together either in unison or in parts, and the spirit could be present. Please do not hesitate to use a simple form such as this in the early stages of your service. If you want more volume, try playing the soprano part in octaves—right hand and left hand playing the same notes one octave apart. This will offer greater support to those who sing in the tenor and bass ranges. Here is an example:

**174 While of These Emblems, soprano line in octaves, on principals 8’ and 4’.

Now listen to another example, hymn 5, “High on the Mountain Top”, soprano line only. Follow along on the arrangement that is provided with this course, and see if you can detect some problems. Listen for breaks in the line where it should be legato, for ties or nearly ties between repeated notes where there
should be breaks, for legato at phrase endings where there should be breaks, and for blurring (or overlegato) between notes that should be played legato.

**5 High on the Mountain Top (q=72), soprano line only, on principals 8, 4, and 2, with problems as described above.

Here is the same hymn without the problems, now with the soprano line played in octaves by the right and left hands, and with an important stop added to the 8, 4, and 2-foot principals—the chorus mixture, which will be described in a moment.

**5 High on the Mountain Top, soprano line only, on principals 8, 4, 2, mixture, in octaves.

[Chorus mixture]

The chorus mixture is often called Fourniture, Plein Jeu, or just plain Mixture, followed by a Roman numeral III or above. The Roman numeral indicates the number of pipes that sound when a single key is played. These pipes sound very high-pitched fifths and octaves, designed to “cap off” a principal chorus. The resulting sound is described as brilliant, bright, and full. Chorus mixtures should only be used in combination with the strongest 8’, 4’, and usually 2’ stops in the division. They are most effective when playing jubilant, exultant, or majestic hymns and organ pieces.

Listen to a majestic four-part hymn beginning with principals 8, 4, and 2 on the Great, and in the Pedal with principal 16 and Great to Pedal. Based on my description of a chorus mixture, see if you can hear the point in the example where it is added to “cap off” the principal chorus.

** 259 Hope of Israel (q=114), one verse, mixture added at the chorus.

Any stop name that includes a Roman numeral is a compound stop. A compound stop is a single stop that activates more than one rank or set of pipes. The chorus mixture is one very common type of compound stop. You have all ready learned about another type: the celeste stop, of the type that also includes a Roman numeral II. Although both chorus mixtures and this type of celeste stop are compound stops, they should never be confused.

[Manual technique introduction]

Now find the page titled, “The Six Organ Fingering Techniques” and place it on the music rack of the organ.

As you continue to grow as an organist, your desire to play and hear lines that are beautifully legato and completely independent will increase. Legato playing is made easier at the piano by using the sustaining pedal. Playing the soprano, alto, and tenor parts (three independent lines) at the organ with only two hands—as in the normal arrangement for hymn playing—legato and independence are more difficult to achieve. It is not uncommon to play even thicker textures in sustained style with the two hands.

In the absence of the sustaining pedal, the organist uses specialized fingering techniques to connect the tones. There is not enough time in this course to learn all six of the legato organ fingering techniques, but you have all ready experienced some of them as you have played the few examples presented in these lessons. As you practice in polish mode, gradually become familiar—and eventually fluent—with each of the six legato organ fingering techniques.
Please pause the lesson after each technique is described to play the example and become familiar with the technique.

Direct fingering is familiar to pianists: playing fingers that are next to one another on keys that are next to one another. Direct fingering also includes extending the hand position slightly to reach additional keys, or compressing the hand without crossing. Direct fingering is very efficient, and most desirable of all whenever possible.

Redistribution of the inner part is actually more of a note-reading technique. It is most simple to describe in the context of hymn playing. The right hand usually plays both the soprano and the alto parts. Because the left hand usually plays only the tenor, it can occasionally help out the right hand by reaching up to play one or more alto notes. The alto part is “redistributed” into the left hand. Redistribution is as efficient as direct fingering, but is a little more challenging to get accustomed to since the left hand plays notes in the treble staff, and because there is a tendency to overlap notes when the alto line switches between left and right hands.

Finger crossing is familiar to pianists in scale playing, where the thumb crosses under fingers 3 and 4, and fingers 3 and 4 cross over the thumb. Organists use finger crossing much more extensively: fingers 2 and 3 will cross, as will fingers 3 and 4, and especially fingers 4 and 5. Even non-adjacent fingers will cross—1 and 5, for example. Crossing is most efficient when the fingers are flexible and well curved.

Finger glissando is simply the sliding from a sharp to a natural key by any one of the five fingers to achieve a legato connection. This simple, efficient technique is executed by snapping the finger quickly from the end of the sharp onto the natural.

Finger substitution is the replacement of one finger by another while holding the key down in order to free the first finger. Pianists often use substitution instinctively when listening for a good legato.
However, it requires more motions and time to execute than most of the other techniques. Organists who use many substitutions should explore the possibility replacing some of them with direct fingering, crossing, or finger glissando. Substitutions are indicated by a short curved line between substituting finger numbers.

Thumb glissando is the most unique of the techniques, in which the tip and the base of the thumb are used as though they were two different fingers to achieve legato connections. It is reasonably efficient when executed well, and is particularly useful when playing the left-hand part of many organ pieces and hymn preludes with passages that move in parallel motion like the following examples. Thumb glissando is indicated by a straight line between thumb fingerings.

In summary, this has been The New LDS Organist Lesson 6: Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Single Lines in Legato Style. Make sure that you understand each of these topics, and review them if needed. You were reminded that this and the next three lessons are intended for those wanting to learn how to prepare hymns and pieces in polish mode. You learned how to play single lines in polish mode; that is, perfect legato between the tones, and well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks. The chorus mixture was described as a compound stop that adds brightness to the principal chorus. Finally, you were introduced to each of the six legato fingering techniques, and encouraged to explore each of them as a means of achieving legato when the two hands are required to play three or more parts.

Follow up with this lesson by learning to play several single-line parts in polish mode from hymn arrangements and directly from the hymnbook. Listen intently for perfect legato between the tones, and well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks. If possible, play some of them for a trained organist or other musician who can confirm that your single lines have the perfect legato and well-defined breaks as described. Also, become familiar with each of the six legato fingering techniques, playing through each example several times with the given fingering.

Lesson 7 is next, Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Two Independent Lines in Legato Style. You will learn how to play with true independence of line, and various ways to play hymns in two parts. The versatile chorus reeds will also be introduced. If possible, it will be best to be seated at the organ console again for Lesson 7, and you should have the written materials for that lesson at your fingertips.

Happy practicing!
Lesson 7: Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Two Independent Legato Lines

A podcast by Don Cook, Brigham Young University
See www.organ.byu.edu

Materials needed: Common Stop Names Listed by Family; Hymns 58 and 98 (simplified); Hymns 254, 31, 205, and 6 (Hymnbook)

This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 7: Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Two Independent Lines in Legato Style.

If possible, it will be best to be seated at the organ console. You should have the written materials for this lesson at your fingertips. I am Dr. Don Cook from Brigham Young University.

Lesson 7 is the second of four lessons on how to play hymns in polish mode. You will learn how to play two independent lines in legato style with true independence of line, and various ways to play hymns in two parts. The versatile chorus reeds will also be introduced.

If you have mastered Lesson 6, you should be able to play several single-line parts in polish mode from hymn arrangements and directly from the hymnbook. You should be listening for perfect legato between the tones, and well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks. You should also be familiar with each of the six legato fingering techniques, having played through each example several times with the given fingering. If you have not yet mastered Lesson 6, you should do so before beginning serious work on this lesson.

If the demands of your calling require you to play several hymns and other appropriate music within just a few weeks, you should study Lessons 10 through 12 at the same time that you work carefully on Lessons 6 through 9. You may also need to play most hymns in shortcut mode, as described thoroughly in Lesson 5, for the first few weeks.

[Two-part hymn playing described and explored; independence of line]

Two-part playing means to play some combination of only two of the voice parts. In four-part hymns the most useful combinations are soprano and alto, soprano and tenor, soprano and bass, and tenor and bass. In three-part hymns all possible combinations are useful: right and left, right and pedal, and left and pedal.

When you learned to play in polish mode with soprano only or soprano in octaves, you were able to focus on listening for two very important qualities in your music:

1. perfect legato between the tones (that is, playing smoothly, but avoiding both detaching or blurring the tones), and
2. well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks.

When playing in polish mode with two parts, you must listen for a third important quality: independence of line.
What exactly is “independence of line?” It means that each line keeps its integrity, regardless of what other lines are doing. Breaks in one line do not cause breaks in other lines, and sustained tone in one line does not cause a tie between notes that should be repeated in other lines.

Find your copy of Hymn 98, “I Need Thee Every Hour,” simplified for organ in three parts. Follow along as you listen to the right- and left-hand parts played with true independence of line. You might mark an “x” above the treble staff wherever only one part breaks, requiring independence of line: that is, in the first verse after the words “most,” “no,” the second “I” of the chorus, and between “Oh” and “bless.” Note as you listen that in each line at these points the legato is complete, and that the breaks between repeated notes and at phrase endings are distinct and clear.

***98 I Need Thee Every Hour (q=66), 3-part arrangement, right and left-hand parts, with independence

Now listen to the same example played again. But this time the lines that should be legato (“heavy”) at these points will be broken (“light”), simply because a “light” break occurs in the other part.

***98 I Need Thee Every Hour (q=66), 3-part arrangement, right and left-hand parts, with breaks at independence points

Now listen again. This time the repeated notes will be almost or completely tied (“heavy”) at these points, simply because a “heavy” legato occurs in the other part.

***98 I Need Thee Every Hour (q=66), 3-part arrangement, right and left-hand parts, with flinches and ties at independence points

These, in review, are the two most common problems with independence of line:

1. A break occurs in one line due to a repeated note or phrasing breath. This causes a hand or foot to break in another line where a legato connection or sustained tone should occur. In other words, the “light” break causes another part to be “light” where it should be “heavy.”
   or 2. A sustained tone occurs in one line due to a legato connection, long note, or tie. This causes two notes in another part to be nearly tied (I call this a “flinch”) or completely tied or slurred where a distinct break should occur. In other words, the “heavy” connection in one part causes another part to be “heavy” where it should be “light.”

Here is a simple but effective way to overcome problems with independence of line. I call it the “freezing technique.” If you find yourself breaking where it should be legato; or tying, playing legato, or “flinching” where there should be a distinct break, mark an “x” above the treble staff at that precise point. Starting back one or two beats, play slowly to that point, and then stop or “freeze.” The hand or foot that breaks should be hovering in mid air, and the hand or foot that sustains should still be playing. Hold in that position long enough to feel which hand or foot is heavy, and which hand or foot feels light. Then play to the next note and stop. That is one perfect “freeze.” Here is an example of the freezing technique applied in “I Need Thee Every Hour,” the three-part arrangement, between measures 2 and 3.

***98 I Need Thee Every Hour (q=66), 3-part arrangement, all three parts, freezing technique

Repeat this little process three or four times, following every step exactly as described. Notice how much easier it becomes every time! Now start back a measure or two and practice slowly through that spot without freezing. This process takes no more than a minute or two, and will reward you many times over in clean, independent lines.
Now it’s your turn to try playing with good legato, well-defined breaks, and independence of line. It will take some practice to learn both parts by yourself, so for now just play the right-hand part as I play the left-hand part. You should notice that my legato connections do not care about your breaks, and my breaks don’t care about your legato connections. Likewise, your legato connections and breaks should not care about what my line is doing—they are two completely independent lines!

Pull principals 8 and 4 on the Great. Play legato throughout, except for breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaths. I’ll count “1  2” and we’ll both come in on “3.” You play right hand. Ready, “1, 2,”

***98 I Need Thee Every Hour (q=66), 3-part arrangement, left-hand part

Next you play left hand while I play right. Ready, “1, 2,”

***98 I Need Thee Every Hour (q=66), 3-part arrangement, right-hand part

If you wish, go back and play these parts again until you feel comfortable playing your part with complete independence from mine. Of course, they should share the same pulse, and the phrases should end together.

We have just experienced two independent parts played in polish mode. The lines flow in a smooth legato, and the repeated notes are clearly distinguished one from another. Also, phrase breaks occur in a way that helps to clarify the meaning of the text in verse one.

[Choosing which two of the four parts to play]

Playing this hymn in this way (right and left hands only) does not result in the complete harmony that is certainly desirable. However, with this stop combination (principals 8 and 4) you could provide adequate support to help lead those in the congregation. They could sing together either in unison or in parts, and the spirit could be present. Please remember not to hesitate to use a simple form such as this in the early stages of your service.

Playing the right- and left-hand parts of a three-part arrangement is only one of several two-part combinations that might be used for congregational accompaniment, prelude, or postlude. You might also try the right hand and pedal parts of a three-part arrangement. Or, consider the following combinations of two parts from a four-part hymn, “True to the Faith,” no. 254. This is an example of a very challenging hymn that is made playable for congregational accompaniment, prelude, or postlude—even in polish mode—by using these two-part combinations:

Soprano and alto, or soprano and tenor. Here is an example of each. First, soprano and alto.

***254 True to the Faith, soprano and alto

Next, soprano and tenor.

***254 True to the Faith, soprano and tenor

Soprano and bass, with bass played by either the left hand or the feet. In this example, the very active bass part will be played by the left hand.
Next is a particularly useful and enjoyable way to use two-part playing in polish mode for congregational accompaniment, prelude, or postlude. Two organists can share the four parts: one plays soprano with right hand and alto with left, and the other plays tenor with right hand and bass with left. For congregational accompaniment, play all hands on the Great. For prelude or postlude play all hands on either manual, switch between the two manuals, or solo out the soprano line on the other manual. Always pay particular attention to producing a good legato, well-defined breaks, and independence of line. There are several benefits. Most importantly: the congregation will hear all four parts played well. Also, each organist will need to learn only two parts instead of four, and they will learn to follow the director and to respond to one another. It does require that the organists practice both by themselves and together.

When playing two-part combinations, each hymn or arrangement will work better with certain combinations than with others. When the two parts move through the phrase in parallel thirds or sixths; or end the phrase with a third, sixth or octave between them, the result should be favorable. When the interval between the two parts at phrase endings is a fourth or fifth, try playing the tenor note in the alto instead, or just try another combination.

In the following example you will hear the soprano and alto parts. All phrases end with a fourth, leaving an unsettled feeling at each phrase ending.

***205 Once in Royal David’s City, soprano and alto only, pr84, q=80

Listen again to the same hymn, but now with soprano and tenor parts. All phrases end with the interval of a sixth instead of the fourth, resulting in a more stable finish for each phrase.

***205 Once in Royal David’s City, soprano and tenor only, pr84, q=80

Once again, listen to the soprano and bass of the same hymn. All phrases end with the interval of an octave between soprano and bass, resulting in a very stable but rather bland ending for each phrase. The bass part is played in the Pedal.

***205 Once in Royal David’s City, soprano and bass (pedal) only, pr84, q=84

[Chorus reeds]

We now shift gears into an important organ registration topic: chorus reeds. Reed pipes produce tone differently than flue pipes. Instead of blowing a sheet of air across the opening on the front of a pipe, reed pipes blow air around a moving tongue—much like a clarinet. Because of this difference, the tone of a reed pipe tends to stand out from any principal, flute, string, or hybrid (all of which are flue pipes). As with vocalists, reed stops that stand out most are called “solo reeds.” Those that are able to blend with the flues are called “chorus reeds.” This lesson is limited to those that blend—the “chorus reeds.”

Here are some of the most common chorus reed stop names:

Trumpet (or Trompette)
Basson (or Fagott)
Oboe (or Hautbois)
Posaune (or Trombone)
Bombarde
Dulzian (not to be confused with Dulciana)
Clarion (spelled “clarion” or “claIRon”)

Take a moment now and find all the chorus reeds on your organ. Stop the recording long enough to hear the tone of each one.

Because the tone of these stops is smoother and often softer than solo reeds, they are capable of blending with the flues. However, they are also capable of doubling as solo reeds. In hymn playing, chorus reeds are used most commonly as a means of adding “fire” to the full principal chorus. Usually the organist will build to principals 8, 4, 2, and chorus mixture (a “bright” principal chorus), and then add the 8’ chorus reed for “fire.” Listen to the third verse of the simplified four-part arrangement of hymn 58, “Come, Ye Children of the Lord.” The chorus reed is added to the full principal chorus half-way through the verse.

***58 Come, Ye Children of the Lord, verse 3, beginning with pr 8,4,2,mix, adding chorus reed 8 at measure 9

Now, stop the lesson and listen to your organ as you add the eight-foot chorus reed to the full principal chorus with mixture.

For an even more fiery effect, add chorus reeds 8 and 4. Notice, also, the addition of the 16-foot chorus reed in the Pedal on the last line of the hymn.

***58 Come, Ye Children of the Lord, verse 3, beginning with pr8,4,2,mix, adding chorus reeds 8 and 4 at measure 9, and in the Pedal, chorus reed 16 at measure 13

Listen now to your organ as you add both eight-foot and four-foot chorus reeds to the full principal chorus with mixture, and then as you add the 16’ chorus reed in the Pedal.

For a less-than-bright ensemble, the eight-foot chorus reed can be added before the chorus mixture. The result is a darker sort of fiery ensemble than with both mixtures and reeds. The following example begins with principals 8, 4, and 2. The eight-foot chorus reed comes in at the midpoint, followed by the addition of the chorus mixture four measures later.

***58 Come, Ye Children of the Lord, verse 3, beginning with pr8,4,2, adding chorus reeds 8 at measure 9, and the chorus mixture at measure 13

Try this at your organ: pull principals 8, 4, and 2. Listen for a moment, and then add the chorus reed 8. Listen again, and then add the chorus mixture.

The gentler chorus reeds, particularly the Oboe or Hautbois, or a muted Trumpet, can also add a rather dark sort of fire to a full chorus of 8- and 4-foot stops. This combination can be particularly effective in hymn verses that have a contrasting, darker message. Listen, for example, to “Redeemer of Israel,” the end of verse 2, going into the beginning of verse 3. The darker message of verse 3 is reflected in the registration by removing the chorus mixture and 2-foot stops, and adding the Oboe 8. The redemption promised in verse 4 is reflected in the return of the bright 2-foot stops and mixture, which lend brilliance to the fiery chorus reeds.

***6 Redeemer of Israel, end of verse 2, verse 3, and beginning of verse 4, registered as described above
Another means of achieving a dark, gravely tone is to add the 16-foot chorus reed to the manual chorus. This can be particularly effective in the grand, majestic, slow-moving type of hymn. Listen to Hymn 31, “O God, Our Help in Ages Past,” played in this manner.

***31 O God, Our Help in Ages Past, principals 8, 4, 2, mix, and 16 ’ chorus reed

Because of their distinctive tone, chorus reeds need special treatment. They should not be overused. Drawing chorus reeds for more than one verse of a hymn, for example, can be tiring to the ear. If congregations are not accustomed to hearing reed tone, begin using it sparingly and always with purpose. Never use strong reed tone where a more meditative spirit is appropriate.

In summary, this has been The New LDS Organist Lesson 7: Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Two Independent Lines in Legato Style. Make sure that you understand each of these topics, and review them if needed. You were reminded that lessons 6 through 9 are intended for those wanting to learn how to prepare hymns and pieces in polish mode. You learned how to play two independent lines in polish mode; that is, perfect legato between the tones, well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks, and true independence of line. You were made aware of the two most common problems that organists have with independence of line. You also learned several two-part arrangements of three- and four-part hymns that can be useful. Finally, the chorus reed was described as a stop that adds fire to the principal chorus. Other special qualities and applications of the chorus reed were also described.

Follow up with this lesson by learning to play several two-part combinations in polish mode from hymn arrangements and directly from the hymnbook. Listen intently for perfect legato between the tones, well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks, and independence of line. If possible, play some of them for a trained organist or other musician who can confirm that your single lines have the perfect legato, well-defined breaks, and independence as described. Also, become familiar with the several applications of the chorus reed.

Lesson 8 is next, Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Three Independent Lines in Legato Style. You will learn how to play three parts with only two hands, always playing with true independence of line, and various ways to play hymns in three parts. Couplers will also be explained, and how to achieve balance between manual and pedal. If possible, it will be best to be seated at the organ console for Lesson 8, and you should have the written materials for that lesson at your fingertips.

Happy practicing!
Lesson 8: Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Three Independent Legato Lines

A podcast by Dr. Don Cook, Brigham Young University
Visit <www.organ.byu.edu>

Materials needed: How to Learn Three-Part Hymns and Pieces; Common Stop Names Listed by Family; Hymn 98 (simplified); Hymns 108 and 226 (Hymnbook)

This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 8: Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Three Independent Lines in Legato Style.

If possible, it will be best to be seated at the organ console. You should have the written materials for this lesson at your fingertips. I am Dr. Don Cook from Brigham Young University.

Lesson 8 is the third of four lessons on how to play hymns in polish mode. You will learn how to play three independent lines in legato style with true independence of line, and various ways to play hymns in three parts. Also, you will learn how to build stop combinations in the manuals and the pedals that balance—including the use of couplers.

If you have mastered Lesson 7, you should be able to play several two-part combinations in polish mode from hymn arrangements and directly from the hymnbook. You should be listening for perfect legato between the tones, well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks, and independence of line. You should also be familiar with various possible applications of the chorus reeds. If you have not yet mastered Lesson 7, you should do so before beginning serious work on this lesson.

If your calling requires you to play several hymns and other pieces within just a few weeks, you should be studying Lessons 10 through 12 at the same time that you work carefully on Lessons 6 through 9. You may also need to play most hymns in shortcut mode, as described thoroughly in Lesson 5, for the first few weeks.

[Three-part hymn playing described and explored]

Three-part playing means to play some combination of only three of the voice parts. In four-part hymns the most useful three-part combinations are soprano, alto, and tenor; soprano, alto, and bass; and soprano, tenor, and bass. Of course, in three-part hymns or arrangements, all three parts are needed: right, left, and pedal.

As in two-part playing, when you learn to play in polish mode with three parts, you must listen for these three important qualities:

1. perfect legato between the tones (that is, playing smoothly, but avoiding both detaching or blurring the tones),
2. well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks, and
3. independence of line (that is, breaks or sustained tone in one line do not affect the integrity of any other line)

Find your copy of Hymn 98, “I Need Thee Every Hour,” simplified for organ in three parts. You would be wise at this early stage to mark the points where a break or a legato connection occurs in only one part. For example, after the first note, mark a comma between the two bass notes G, because it is the only part that breaks (think “light”). The other parts are legato (think “heavy”). Between “most” and “gracious,” mark a
comma between the two soprano notes G for the same reason, and between “gra-“ and “cious” mark a comma between the two bass notes C again for the same reason. Between “No” and “tender” mark a straight line connecting soprano notes D and A, because it is the only part that is legato (that is, they are “heavy”). The other parts break (that is, they are “light”). And so forth.

Follow along with your score as you listen to the three parts played with true independence of line. Note the truly legato connections, and the distinct breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks.

***98 I Need Thee Every Hour (q=66), 3-part arrangement, with independence

Now listen to the same example played again. But this time the lines that should be legato (“heavy”) will be broken (“light”), simply because a “light” break occurs in some other part.

***98 I Need Thee Every Hour (q=66), 3-part arrangement, meas. 1-8, with breaks at independence points

Now listen again. This time the repeated notes will be almost or completely tied (“heavy”) at these points, simply because a “heavy” legato occurs in another other part.

***98 I Need Thee Every Hour (q=66), 3-part arrangement, meas. 1-8, with flinches and ties at independence points

These, in review, are the two most common problems with independence of line:

1. A break occurs in one line where it should, due to a repeated note or phrasing breath. This causes a hand or foot to break in another line where a legato connection or sustained tone should occur. In other words, the “light” break causes another part to be “light” where it should be “heavy.”
   or, a second common problem with independence of line: A sustained tone occurs in one line where it should, due to a legato connection, long note, or tie. This causes two notes in another part to be nearly tied (I call this a “flinch”) or completely tied or slurred where a distinct break should occur. In other words, the “heavy” connection in one part causes another part to be “heavy” where it should be “light.”

Remember the “freezing technique” from lesson 7? Review this process if you need to—it takes just a few moments of concentration, and offers great rewards in clean, independent lines.

Now it’s your turn to try playing one of the two-line combinations that you learned in Lesson 7 while I play the third. The point: play each line with good legato, well-defined breaks, and independence of line. It will take more practice to learn all three parts by yourself, so for now just play the right- and left-hand parts as I play the pedal part. Note once more that my legato connections in the Pedal do not care about your right- and left-hand breaks, and my breaks don’t care about your legato connections. Likewise, your legato connections and breaks should not care about what my line is doing—they are three completely independent lines!

Pull principals 8 and 4 on the Great. Make sure that the expression pedals are fully open. Play legato throughout, except for breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks. I’ll count “1 2” and we’ll both come in on “3.” You play right and left hands. Ready, “1, 2,”

***98 I Need Thee Every Hour (q=66), 3-part arrangement, pedal part

If you wish, go back and play these parts again until you feel comfortable playing your parts with complete independence from mine. Of course, they should share the same pulse, and the phrases should end together.
How to learn three-part hymns

What is an effective and efficient way to really learn a task as challenging as playing a three-part hymn? Let’s say, for example, that you are unable to sightread the three parts of “I Need Thee Every Hour” in polish mode, so you would like to learn them. Try this procedure, which has three main stages: prepare, learn each section, and put the sections together.

The first stage: **PREPARE** (steps 1-2)

**Step 1. SIGHT-READ.** Do your best to play through the piece. This will help you identify some of the obstacles to overcome, such as notes, rhythm, fingering, legato, or independence.

**Step 2. PREPARE THE SCORE**

a. If you are dealing with a HYMN:
   - Mark PHRASING in the text. For each verse, mark a comma or vertical line in places where a break would help to clarify the meaning of the words. Mark a slur between words where playing without a break might help to clarify the meaning. Even thought the congregation may breathe at such points, you can really draw attention to the message of the hymn in this way.
   - ADD ANY TIES. If necessary, add ties as needed to improve the sustained character of the hymn. This will only be necessary in four-part hymns played directly from the hymnbook. In all of the arrangements that came with this course, these decisions have all ready been made, and any adjustments have been written into the music.

b. Divide the piece into SECTIONS. If you did rather well at sight-reading, the sections can be larger (four to eight measures). If your sight-reading was far from the mark, make the sections smaller (one to two measures). Continue with the following steps for each section.

c. Add FINGERING AND PEDALING. This is a must unless you can sight-read it very well. Planning and learning good fingering and pedaling helps in two very important ways. First, security—you will be able to play more accurately and with greater confidence. Second, retention—you will be able to bring it back with only minimal effort for the rest of your life. You do not need to mark fingering or pedaling for every note; instead, mark key places—where a new pattern begins, a skip occurs, a crossing, substitution, glissando, or any unnatural action must occur. Make just enough marks to lead you to play the passage the same way every time. Mark fingering and pedaling for the whole piece or just a few sections at a time, as you prefer.

The second stage: **LEARN EACH SECTION** (this is similar to the seven-step plan to be explained in the next lesson)

**Step 1. Practice ONE LINE.**

Step 1a. Begin by practicing one line SLOWLY AND PERFECTLY. How slowly? Slowly enough to stay in control. Make sure the fingering or pedaling are exactly as planned, or adjust them as needed. Check for accuracy of notes and rhythm, for perfect legato, and for well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks. Practice at that tempo until you can play it three to five times perfectly without much conscious effort.

Step 1b. SLIGHTLY INCREASE TEMPO. How slightly? It depends, but try 2-4 beats per minute. Practice until you can play it three to five times perfectly without much effort. Repeat this step until you arrive at a “goal” tempo for that step.

**Step 2. Practice A SECOND LINE.** Go through step 1 for a second line.

**Step 3. Practice TWO LINES COMBINED.**

Step 3a. Begin by practicing the first and second lines SLOWLY AND PERFECTLY. Remember: slowly enough to stay in control. Thoroughly learn the fingering or pedaling exactly as planned, or adjust them as needed. Check notes and rhythm as before, but now shift your attention to the perfect legato and well-defined breaks in each line. Make sure that when a break occurs in one
line, it does not cause a break in another line where sustained tone is needed. And make sure that the sustained tone in one line does not cause a tie or “flinch” in another line where a well-defined break should occur. If such problems occur, using the “freezing technique” as described in Lesson 7 will save a lot of time. Practice at that slow tempo until you can play it three to five times perfectly without much conscious effort.

Step 3b. SLIGHTLY INCREASE TEMPO, as explained in step 1b. Repeat this step until you arrive at a “goal” tempo for that step.

Step 4. A THIRD LINE. Repeat step 1 for a third line.

Step 5. THREE LINES COMBINED IN PAIRS. Practice step 3 for the third and second lines. When finished, practice step 3 for the third and first lines.

Step 6. ALL THREE LINES COMBINED.

Step 6a. Begin by practicing all three lines together SLOWLY AND PERFECTLY. Always practice slowly enough to stay in control. Keep the fingering and pedaling as planned, watch notes and rhythm, the legato, the well-defined breaks, and independence of line. Be quick to use the “freezing technique” whenever independence problems occur. Practice at that slow tempo until you can play three to five times perfectly without much conscious effort.

Step 6b. SLIGHTLY INCREASE TEMPO, as explained in step 1b. Repeat this step until you arrive at a “goal” tempo for that step.

Step 7. NEW SECTION. Repeat steps 1-6 for a new section.

The third stage: REVIEW AND COMBINE THE SECTIONS. Continue practicing previously learned sections each day, always practicing slowly enough to stay in control. Each time you learn one, leave it, and learn it again, as long as you are playing with great control, you will be driving reflex-like habits deeper into your subconscious mind. It is the subconscious recall of those many physical “reflexes” that you will rely on as you perform hymns and pieces. Begin combining the sections into larger and larger sections as they become easier, until you can play the entire hymn.

As you put the sections together, devise and begin practicing a REGISTRATIONAL PLAN that reflects the meaning of the text and the spirit of the music, and that supports and encourages the congregation.

Here is a summary of the order in which you might learn the three lines of “I Need Thee Every Hour” within each section:

Right, Left, Left/Right, Pedal, Pedal/Left, Pedal/Right, and finally all three parts.

[Choosing which three of the four parts to play]

Playing three-part hymns falls just short of the complete harmony that is found in traditional four-part hymns. However, with this stop combination (principals 8 and 4) you could provide adequate leadership for a congregation. They could sing together either in unison or in parts, and the spirit could be present. Please remember not to hesitate to use a simple form such as this in the early stages of your service.

Playing three-part hymn arrangements is only one of several three-part combinations that might be used for congregational accompaniment, prelude, or postlude. Consider, for example, the soprano/alto/bass or soprano/tenor/bass combinations from a four-part hymn. Use the alto line with soprano and bass if it does a better job of completing the harmony than does the tenor. The following hymn, for example, seems to work well with the soprano/alto/bass combination:

***108 The Lord Is My Shepherd, q=70, soprano/alto/bass
It is uncommon to find a hymn where either soprano/alto/bass or soprano/tenor/bass produces the best result throughout the whole hymn. Switching between the two can be even more effective. In this same hymn, for example, switching to the soprano/tenor/bass combination for the last eight measures offers the very best result.

***108 The Lord Is My Shepherd, soprano/alto/bass to line 3 measure 3, then switch to soprano/tenor/bass

“Improve the Shining Moments” seems to work best when we begin with soprano/alto/bass, switching to the tenor at the word “don’t,” back to the alto at line 2, to the tenor at the word “to,” and finally to the alto mid-phrase at “the shadow.”

***226 Improve the Shining Moments, as described above

How do you know whether soprano/alto/bass or soprano/tenor/bass is best, and when you ought to switch between them? Simply try one out and let your ear be the guide. Here are some specific clues:

- Favor the lines that offer complete harmonies at the ends of phrases (that is, three different notes) or at least the root and the third of the chord (rather than the root and the fifth).
- Favor the line that moves in parallel thirds or sixths, or in contrary motion with the soprano, rather than simply repeating the same note.
- Try to avoid shifting between alto and tenor too often, or for only a few notes.
- If a shift is necessary, try to place it at the beginning of a new phrase, or where the movement of that middle part will be as natural as possible (as it is in the mid-phrase switch on the words, “the shadow.”)

We now shift gears into another important organ registration topic: balancing the manual and the pedal.

In chorus-type registration, more than one part plays on a single manual and another part plays in the pedal. (This also applies in the accompaniment and pedal parts of a solo-and-accompaniment type combination.) When we speak of the principal “chorus,” we are referring to one important form of “chorus” registration. Chorus registration stands in contrast to solo registration, in which only a single part (usually the highest part) plays on a manual or in the pedal. In chorus registration all parts should balance (that is, be of similar volume and tone color), but in solo registration one part should stand out (that is, be of greater volume or tone color).

After drawing a combination of stops on a manual, if we want to create a combination in the pedal to balance, we must consider both volume and tone color. I’ll describe this first, and then you can try it. Begin by limiting your choices to certain pitches. In the pedal, normally build upward from a 16-foot foundation, and an 8-foot pitch is nearly always a “must” for pitch definition. Then build pitches to either one octave below the highest manual pitch, or to the same highest pitch as the manual. So, if the manual combination is 8 and 4, use either 16 and 8, or 16, 8, and 4 in the pedal. If the manual combination is 8, 4, 2, mixture, use 16, 8, 4, and mixture in the pedal (there will not usually be a 2’ stop in the pedal).

Try this form of balance at your organ. Make sure that the expression pedals are fully open. On the Great, pull principals 8 and 4. In the pedal, pull Principal or Diapason 16 (or the main 16-foot stop) only. Play the first few bars of a piece, both manual and pedal, and notice that the pedal is underbalanced and lacks definite pitch. Add the pedal Principal, Diapason, or Octave 8, play the same passage, and notice the improvement in both balance and pitch definition. Next, add the 4-foot principal or flute in the pedal. Play
the passage again. The manual and pedal should still be in balance, with slightly stronger pitch definition than before. If you wish, you might try repeating this process with flute stops, noting similar results at each stage.

Here is another way to achieve balance—guaranteed balance—between manual and pedal. I’ll describe it first, and then you can try it. After building the manual combination on the Great, we pull the Great to Pedal coupler (called “Great to Pedal,” or “Great to Pedal 8”). This coupler “copies” the stop combination from the Great into the Pedal, leaving it still playable on the Great. Next, we add the 16’ stop or stops in the Pedal that provide the appropriate weight, and there is balance! Note, however, that if you play a key in the pedal and try to play the corresponding key on the Great, there will be no new sound, since those pipes are all ready playing. If the lowest line on the manual intersects or crosses the bassline, and if you wish to keep the lines independent, you probably need to avoid using the coupler.

Try using the manual-to-pedal coupler to achieve pedal balance at your organ. Make sure that the expression pedals are still fully open. On the Great, pull principals 8 and 4. In the Pedal, pull the Great to Pedal coupler. Play middle-C on the Great, and then middle-C (the highest C) in the Pedal. They should sound exactly the same, because the coupler is copying the Great combination into the Pedal. Next, add the main 16-foot flute in the Pedal. Comparing the two C’s again, you should still notice a good balance, but now the Pedal has its characteristic 16-foot foundation.

Duplicating manual pitches in the pedal will produce a richer pedal combination, but will not necessarily increase the pedal volume very much. For this reason, organists often have many more stops sounding in the pedal than in the manual, yet the manual/pedal balance remains intact. For example, principals 8, 4, and 2 in the manual and principals 16, 8, 4, and Great to Pedal would seem to produce an overbalanced pedal. But this is rather standard practice, and the balance is usually adequate.

If you wish to copy the stop combination from the Swell into the Great, use the Swell to Great coupler. This is particularly useful if you want a richer combination on the Great. On your organ, pull principals 8 and 4 on the Great, and principals or flutes 8 and 4 on the Swell. Play a few bars on the Great. Now add the Swell to Great coupler (called “Swell to Great,” or “Swell to Great 8”) and play again. Notice that the ensemble grows richer but not much louder.

You might also use Swell to Great to add a single stop that is not available on the Great. Retire all Stops on the Swell and the Swell to Great coupler, and make sure that the expression pedals are fully open. You want to add a 2’ stop on the Great, but one that is less assertive than the 2-foot principal. So you pull the 2’ flute on the Swell and wait for the right moment. Play a few bars on the Great, and when you want that gentle 2-foot “shimmer,” pull the Swell to Great coupler and play.

To achieve balance, we begin by using organ stops from similar families, as we have been doing so far. Principals 8 and 4 on the manual and flutes 16 and 8 in the pedal would produce an underbalanced pedal. String celeste 8 on the Swell with principals 16 and 8 in the Pedal would produce an overbalanced pedal. Instead, balance the more robust principals with principals, and the gentler flutes with flutes, hybrids, and strings. Once you are accustomed to achieving balance with stops of similar families, you can use the unique characteristics of each stop to create emphasis on certain pitch levels. For example, flutes 8 and 4 on the manual with flute 16 and principal 8 in the pedal would produce a rather edgy tone at the 8-foot level in the pedal, while probably still achieving acceptable balance.

One important quality of manual couplers remains. Try this on your organ: pull the 8-foot reed on the Swell and the 8-foot principal on the Great. Play a few notes on the Great—there is no reed, right? To hear the Swell reed on the Great, pull Swell to Great. Play again on the Great and hear the reed copied from the Swell. Next, let’s hear the Great combination in the Pedal. To hear this, pull the Great to Pedal coupler.
Play a few notes in the Pedal—there is no Swell reed, right? The Swell to Great coupler did not couple through to the Pedal by using the Great to Pedal coupler. To hear the Swell in the Pedal, you must engage the Swell to Pedal coupler. Once you do so, you hear both the Swell reed and the Great principal in the Pedal.

In summary, this has been The New LDS Organist Lesson 8: Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Three Independent Lines in Legato Style. Make sure that you understand each of these topics, and review them if needed. You were reminded that lessons 6 through 9 are intended for those wanting to learn how to prepare hymns and pieces in polish mode. You learned how to play three independent lines in polish mode, and were introduced to a ten-step procedure for practicing three-part pieces. You also learned several ways to balance manual and pedal combinations, and how to use both manual-to-pedal couplers and manual-to-manual couplers.

Follow up with this lesson by learning to play one or more three-part hymn arrangements, and one or more hymns with three of the four voices only: soprano/alto/bass or soprano/tenor/bass. Continue to listen with care for perfect legato between the tones, well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks, and independence of line. If possible, play some of them for a trained organist or other musician who can help you listen for those qualities. Also, build several manual-and-pedal combinations with good balance, both with and without the use of the manual-to-pedal and manual-to-manual couplers.

Lesson 9 is next, Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Four Independent Lines in Legato Style. You will learn how to play four-part hymns with hands and feet, and with only the hands. Also, you will learn several different forms of playing four-part hymns and, as always, we will be listening for true independence of line. The organ’s combination action (or memory system) will be explored in detail. It will be best to be seated at the organ console for Lesson 9, and you should have the written materials for that lesson at your fingertips.

Happy practicing!
This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 9: Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Four Independent Legato Lines in Legato Style.

If possible, later in the lesson it will be best to be seated at the organ console. You should have the written materials for this lesson at your fingertips. I am Dr. Don Cook from Brigham Young University.

Lesson 9 is the fourth and final lesson on how to play hymns in polish mode. You will learn how to play four independent lines in legato style with true independence of line, and various ways to play hymns in four parts. Also, you will learn how about making registration changes between verses of congregational hymns.

If you have mastered Lesson 8, you should be able to play in polish mode at least one three-part hymn arrangement and some three-part combinations directly from the hymnbook. You should be accustomed to listening for perfect legato between the tones, well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks, and independence of line. You should also be able to achieve good balance between the manual and pedals, and to make use of the couplers. If you have not yet mastered Lesson 8, you should do so before beginning serious work on this lesson.

If your calling requires you to play several hymns and other pieces within just a few weeks, you should be studying Lessons 10 through 12 at the same time that you work carefully on Lessons 6 through 9. You may also need to play most hymns in shortcut mode, as described thoroughly in Lesson 5, for the first few weeks.

[Four-part hymn playing in its most common forms]

Four-part hymn playing means to play all of the voice parts in a four-part hymn. Basically there are only two practical ways for a beginning organist to do this: first, the normal arrangement (the hands play soprano, alto, and tenor on the Great, and the feet play the bass part); and second, manual only (right hand plays soprano and alto, left hand plays tenor and bass, both on the Great). But there are several forms in which four-part hymns often appear on paper, listed below with simplest first:

- On two or three staves arranged for organ with simplified left hand and/or pedal
- On two or three staves arranged for organ with generous tying
- On three staves, broken down for learning at the organ in a 7- or 15-step plan without text
- On two staves, directly from the hymnbook

Be reminded that when we play hymns at the organ from a standard hymnbook, we are reading choral or vocal music. The absence of the curly brace, the occasional slurs where a voice takes two notes to sing a single syllable, and the presence of the text reminds us that this is not organ music! Because the organ
produces tone in a very different way than the human voice, we must adapt the notes that we read in the hymnbook to the organ. So that you can learn to play these hymns in polish mode sooner, this course and several other resources provide hymns arranged for organ so that you will not have to do the arranging yourself. We suggest that you rely on these arrangements as much as needed until you can play them easily in polish mode.

Let’s take a look at each of the four forms mentioned a moment ago, helping you to know where to find them and how to learn them. First, those four-part arrangements written on two or three staves arranged for organ with simplified left hand and/or pedal. Some easy arrangements in this form appear in this course, and include the subtitle, “simplified for organ in four parts.” “Now Let Us Rejoice” (hymn 3) is an example. As you listen, note the simplicity of the pedaling and fingering.

### **3 Now Let Us Rejoice, simplified for organ in four parts**

The next form is hymns written on two or three staves, arranged for organ with generous tying. Many of these were transcribed for organ by Robert Cundick and Don Cook under the title, “Three-Stave Hymn Accompaniments.” They are available either on the Internet for free download, or in printed form. Refer to the resource list for details, and please locate the sample copy in your lesson materials. The chief benefit of this resource is its simplicity. The primary goal was to help an early-level organist to play the hymns well (that is, in polish mode), as simply as possible. So ties were added generously, because it is simpler for the organist to sustain a tone than to repeat it. Some hymns were simplified in spots, but usually the full four-part harmony has been preserved. The hymns were chosen from among those most often sung, not the simplest. But if you need a difficult hymn made simpler by adding ties and writing it out on three staves, this format may be helpful. You will need to add fingering and pedaling. Here is an example:

### **3 Now Let Us Rejoice, from Three-Stave Hymn Accompaniments.**

Notice that each of these sixty-plus hymns is also available on the Internet in a lower key, which is particularly helpful in unison singing. Access these by clicking “transposed to lower keys” at the top of the listing of hymns.

Another useful form, especially to those learning to play in polish mode, is hymns broken down for learning at the organ in a 7- or 15-step plan without text, and written on three staves. The best known resource for this form is the book Hymn Studies for Organists by Dr. Parley L. Belnap, professor emeritus of music at Brigham Young University. His book is a thorough method for hymn playing. It begins with the easiest LDS hymns broken down into fifteen steps, fingering and pedaling included. All repeated notes are repeated throughout the learning process, resulting in a “strict version” at step fifteen. An added and final step is a “modified version,” with ties added as needed to improve the sustained character of the hymn. You must then transcribe the needed marks to the hymnbook, and learn to play it from the hymnbook so that you can see the text as you play. After several hymns are presented in this manner, he includes several hymns without the fifteen steps, but with all the fingering for the strict version and adding ties for the modified versions. Eventually even the fingering and ties are removed, and creative techniques for hymn playing are presented.

Another resource containing examples of the 7- and 15-step methods is The OrganTutor Workbook by Dr. Don Cook. There is one main difference between these examples and the Hymn Studies approach. Ties are added at the beginning of the process rather than at the end. This eliminates the need to learn both a strict and a modified version, since the fifteenth step becomes, in effect, the “modified version.”
The last of the four forms in which hymns commonly appear is that written on two staves, played directly from the hymnbook. Ideally this is the form you will want to use after you have developed your ability to play in polish mode. Locate the example of the hymn in the written materials titled, “Redeemer of Israel (Example of Fully-Prepared Score).” Notice that phrasing, fingering and pedaling, ties, and a registrational plan have all been added directly in the score. After months or years of serving as an organist, you should have many hymns marked up in a manner similar to this. Most organists prefer large-print hymnbooks because of the increased space available to add these markings.

As you build your library of marked hymns, one other resource can be particularly helpful—Hymns from the L.D.S. Hymnal Marked for the Organ by Carol Dean (see the handout, “Sample from Hymns from the L.D.S. Hymnal Marked for the Organ by Carol Dean”). The author, who earned a master’s degree in organ from Brigham Young University, has prepared the score for most every hymn in the LDS hymnbook with phrasing, fingering, pedaling, and ties. She had the early-level organist in mind as she prepared the volume. The advantages are many and obvious. On the other hand, the fingering and pedaling may not work for every hand, and you should feel free to change them as needed. Also, you should feel free to change the treatment of the text and the repeated notes if you wish.

[How to learn four-part hymns and pieces]

No matter which format from which you will learn and play the four-part hymns, your final rendition should be complete. “Complete” means several things:

- First, the meaning of the text is reflected in your playing
- Next, the repeated notes are treated appropriately
- Next, your fingering and pedaling contribute to good legato (where appropriate), well-defined breaks, and independence of line
- Next, you have followed whatever method was necessary to learn the hymn in polish mode
- And finally, your registrational plan reflects the meaning and phrasing of the text, and the spirit of the music

With every hymn and piece that you learn in polish mode, the next one will become a little easier to play with all this in order. The ultimate goal, and a reachable one, would be to sight-read in this manner. Alas, until you arrive at that level, here is a three-stage plan for learning hymns (and other pieces) from start to finish. The order of these stages is important if you want to learn the hymn only once and avoid backtracking. Because this is such an important outline, it is also given for you in written form as part of this lesson (Take out “Three-Stage Plan for Learning Hymns or Other Four-Part Pieces”, and follow along. You may also want to see “Redeemer of Israel: Example of Fully Prepared Score”).

The first stage: PREPARE THE SCORE. Do your best to SIGHT-READ through the hymn or piece. This will help reveal some of the obstacles to overcome, such as notes, rhythm, fingering, legato, or independence.

1. Deal first with the TEXT (if you are learning a hymn)
   - Understand the MEANING. Note the spirit of the hymn text in general, and then underline a key word in each verse.
   - Also, mark PHRASING in the text. For each verse, mark a comma, verse number, or vertical line in places where a break would help to clarify the meaning. Where the text is clarified by not breaking, you might add a slur as a reminder. Even thought the congregation may breathe at such points, you can really draw attention to the message of the hymn in this way.

2. Second, deal with the REPEATED NOTES (only if you are learning a sustained-style hymn directly from the hymnbook). If inserting a break between all repeated notes results in a choppy
effect, add ties as needed. This procedure will be explained in a later lesson, and is not necessary when an editor has already “arranged” the hymn for organ playing (as in the arrangements that come with this course, the *Three-Stave Hymn Accompaniments*, and others).

3. Divide the hymn or piece into SECTIONS. If you did rather well at sight-reading, the sections can be larger (four to eight measures). If your sight-reading was far from the mark, make the sections smaller (one to two measures).

4. Add FINGERING AND PEDALING. This is a must unless you can sight-read it very well. Planning and learning efficient fingering and pedaling helps in two very important ways. First: security—you will be able to play more accurately and with greater confidence. Second: retention—you will be able to bring it back with reduced effort for the rest of your life. You do not need to mark fingering or pedaling for every note; instead, mark key places—where a new pattern begins, a skip occurs, a crossing, substitution, glissando, or any unnatural action must occur. Make just enough marks that you can play the passage the same way every time. Mark fingering and pedaling for the whole piece or just a few sections at a time, as you prefer. This investment in time will save practice time, will lead to smooth playing, and will etch the patterns permanently into your memory.

The second stage: **LEARN EACH SECTION.** For each section, go through whatever practice method you need to learn it to perfection:

- the 15-step method,
- the 7-step method, or
- a method that is customized to your abilities

The 15- and 7-step methods will be described in detail in a few moments.

The third stage: **REVIEW AND COMBINE THE SECTIONS.** Continue practicing previously learned sections each day, always practicing slowly enough to stay in control. Each time you learn one, leave it, and learn it again, as long as you are playing with great control, you will be driving reflex-like habits deeper into your subconscious mind. It is the *subconscious recall* of those many physical “reflexes” that you will rely on as you perform hymns and pieces. Begin combining the sections into larger and larger sections as they become easier, until you can play the entire hymn.

As you put the sections together, devise and begin practicing a **REGISTRATIONAL PLAN** that reflects the meaning of the text and the spirit of the music, and that supports and encourages the congregation.

[How to learn four-part hymns and pieces—the fifteen-step method]

For the second stage: **LEARN EACH SECTION,** you can choose between two common approaches: the fifteen-step method, or the seven-step method.

For the more challenging pieces, use the fifteen-step method, in which each of the four voices is learned by itself, they are then combined in all 2-part combinations, followed by the three-part combinations, and finally all four parts. At first this may seem more tedious and time consuming than other methods, but in the early stages of organ playing it offers the best chance of learning the piece with good legato, releases, and independence the first time. So it actually saves time by avoiding the difficult task of correcting *errors* that have been practiced and learned.

Here is a breakdown of the fifteen-step method. Practice each of these fifteen steps in one section of the piece at a time:

- Single voices first: soprano, alto, tenor, and then bass
All two-part combinations next: bass/tenor, bass/alto, bass/soprano, soprano/tenor, soprano/alto, alto/tenor

Now the three-part combinations: soprano/alto/tenor, soprano/alto/bass, soprano/tenor/bass, alto/tenor/bass

Finally, all four voices together: soprano/alto/tenor/bass.

You must apply the most important key to effective practice at every step: always practice slowly enough to stay in control. More detail of how to go through each step is given in Lesson 8, where the three-stage procedure is explained. But, in a nutshell, it is this. For each step:

- First, Practice SLOWLY AND PERFECTLY until you can play it three to five times perfectly without much conscious effort.
- Next, SLIGHTLY INCREASE TEMPO (by 2-4 beats per minute), practicing until you can play it three to five times perfectly without much effort. Repeat this step until you arrive at a “goal” tempo for that step.

[How to learn four-part hymns and pieces—the seven-step method]

Eventually, with practice, you will feel less of a need to go through all fifteen steps. In fact, if you are able to learn the right-hand part (including the soprano and most notes of the alto line) as a single step, you can reduce the number of steps from fifteen to seven: right hand, left hand, pedal, pedal/left, pedal/right, right/left, and finally right/left/pedal. It is that simple: the fifteen-step method deals with each of the four voice parts in all their fifteen combinations, while the seven-step method deals with each of the three “units” or “playing parts:” right hand, left hand, and feet, in all their seven combinations. You should choose the method that best fits your needs for the piece: the easier the piece, the more likely it will be that seven steps will be enough.

No matter which method you use, it will only be as effective as your ability to listen for and achieve the three main qualities of polished playing: perfect legato between the tones, well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks, and independence of line. This means that even if you have chosen the seven-step method, occasionally you may need to revert to practicing single voices. When working in polish mode, always listen carefully, taking whatever time might be needed to achieve these qualities in each of the four voice parts.

Rather than giving you examples to play for this lesson, I am going to help you learn how to listen for these three qualities in four-part hymns. Take out hymn 3, “Now Let Us Rejoice” from the simplified hymn arrangements that come with this course. I will first identify the specific section that will be played, and then I will play it twice: once with an error, and a second time without the error. You try to identify the exact error and the part in which it occurs as you listen. Feel free to listen more than once if needed.

Here is a list of the four possible errors that I will make, all of which could be caused by problems with independence of line:

- a break where it should be legato or tied
- a tie where there should be a break
- a legato connection where there should be a break
- a “flinch” where there should be a well-defined break

There will be seven examples.

Example 1: the first two measures
***break everything over the first barline

The error was a break in the soprano and tenor parts over the first barline where it should be legato. These breaks were brought on by the legitimate “light” breaks in the **alto and bass** parts. The soprano and tenor should be legato (“heavy”) against the alto and bass, which should be broken (“light”).

Example 2: the words, “-joyce in the day”

***flinch in the soprano and tenor on “in the”

The errors were “flinches” on the words “in the” in the soprano and tenor where there should be a well-defined break. The “flinches” were brought on by the sustained “heavy” alto and bass parts. The upper part of the right hand and the left hand should feel “light,” resulting in a well-defined break between the repeated notes. The right thumb and the feet should feel “heavy” at that moment.

Example 3: the same words, “-joyce in the day”

***break the soprano between the words “the day”

The error was a break in the soprano part between the words “the day” where it should be legato. The break was brought on by breaks “light” in all of the other three parts. Even though the repeated notes in the other parts should break over the bar line, the moving soprano part needs to keep the perfect “heavy” legato.

Example 4: the words, “strangers on earth need we roam”

***tie in the tenor between the words “earth need we roam”

The errors were ties between repeated notes in the tenor part between the words “earth need we roam” where they should be broken. The ties were brought on by the sustained pedal note. The left hand and pedal parts are often more difficult to keep independent than right and left, or right and pedal. Even though the pedal part is sustained (“heavy”), the repeated notes in the left hand should be clearly broken.

Example 5: the words, “-of redemption will come. When all”

***flinch in all parts over the phrase break

The error was a “flinch” in all parts at the phrase break (between the words “come” and “when”) where all parts should break at the end of the textual and musical phrase. The “flinch” was brought on by the lack of commitment to the phrase break, and also possibly by a confusion over the break in the pedal against the moving upper parts. The solution is simple: mark phrase breaks before ever starting practice, which is the first step in preparing the score.

Example 6: the words “longer as strangers on” (this one will be more subtle, so listen carefully!)

***break in the alto over the bar line

The error was a break in the alto part over both bar lines where it should be legato, brought on by the legitimate “light” breaks in the soprano and/or tenor parts. The alto and bass parts should be legato (“heavy”) against the soprano and tenor, which should be broken (“light”).
Finally, Example 7: the words “shortly the hour”

***tie in the tenor over the bar line

The error was a tie between repeated notes in the tenor part over the bar line where it should be broken. The tie was brought on by the sustained pedal note. Even though the pedal part is sustained (“heavy”), the repeated note in the left hand should be clearly broken—especially over the bar line.

[Making registration changes between verses]

We now shift gears into an organ registration topic directly related to hymn playing: making registration changes between verses. Refer to the page titled “Hymn Registration Shortcuts” for this portion of the lesson. If possible, it will be best now to be seated at the organ console.

You learned in Lesson 5 how to set up basic registrational combinations for both meditative and jubilant hymns. Here is a quick review of that lesson along with a verbal “walk through” of the “Hymn Registration Shortcuts,” which you should have in front of you. As I describe these stop combinations, find and engage them also on your organ, stopping the lesson if you need more time.

Begin by setting any expression pedals (not the crescendo pedal) fully opened unless the organ is too loud for the room. In that case you may need to partially close the expression pedals. For meditative hymns, start with principals 8 and 4 on the Great and principals 16 and 8 (or principal 16 and Great to Pedal) in the Pedal. Try playing a few bars of a meditative hymn on the Great with this stop combination.

***pause

For jubilant hymns, start with principals 8, 4, and 2 on the Great and principals 16, 8, and 4 (or principal 16 and Great to Pedal) in the Pedal. If there is no principal 16 in the Pedal, use the main 16’ flue (such as Subbass, Bourdon, or Gedeckt—which are flutes). Now try playing a few bars of a jubilant hymn on the Great with this stop combination.

***pause

These basic suggestions reflect standard practice in congregational hymn accompaniment, but may need to be modified for your particular situation. If the principal stops are too loud for the room, then try replacing them with flutes and/or hybrids at one or more of the pitch levels—usually 4’ and 2’. If the congregation is not accustomed to registration changes within a hymn, then make your changes few and subtle at first. If no one has heard a chorus mixture or Trompette from the organ, use them sparingly and only on the most jubilant hymns at first, until you feel that they will make a positive contribution to the spirit of the meeting.

While it is both possible and common for organists to play an entire hymn with no change of registration, there are at least two very good reasons for changing the registration once or twice. First, simply for variety. Changing the registration simply adds interest and helps the congregation keep their attention in the hymn singing experience. Second, and more importantly, to reflect the meaning in the text.
Many hymn texts have some form of contrast in one of the verses. This is usually a middle verse. Look, for example, at hymn 174, “While of These Emblems We Partake,” and engage these stops on your organ as I describe them in the lesson. Verses 2 and 3 speak of the death of Jesus, and verse 4 speaks of his triumphant resurrection. Use a stop combination that reflects this changing spirit from verse to verse to help draw attention to the messages in the hymn. So, we might begin this hymn with the Swell chorus of 8, 4, and light 2-foot stops, Swell to Great, and Great principals 8 and 4, as described on the handout. At the end of verse 1 or 2, play both of the last manual notes by one hand or the other, and prepare the other hand to retire Swell to Great. As soon as the notes release, take off Swell to Great and return quickly for the beginning of the new verse. This quick return takes practice, but is well worth the effort. At the end of verse 3, return to triumph by engaging Swell to Great as at first. In this example, I will play from the end of verse 1 into verse 2, and then from the end of verse 3 into verse 4, using the changes just described.

***174 While of These Emblems as described q=80

Now you try playing the manual part of this hymn through as well as you can, with these same registration changes:
- verse 1: Swell: flutes 8, 4, and 2, Swell to Great, and Great: principals 8 and 4.
- for verse 2: take off Swell to Great
- for verse 4: add Swell to Great

Stop the lesson while you practice playing and making these changes.

***pause

An organist who plans and executes a good registrational plan in this manner, along with good textual phrasing, plays an active role in teaching the Gospel by drawing attention to the messages in the hymn.

However, many hymn texts have little or no contrast between verses. In this case, begin with a combination that reflects the general mood of the hymn. Hymn 5, “High on the Mountain Top,” for example, is intended to be sung and played “resolutely.” All four verses share this resolute character, so we would change registration between verses simply to add interest. Most organists typically use two common patterns in this situation:
1. Begin strongly to embolden the singers, reduce the organ’s volume for one or more of the internal verses, and return to a stronger combination for the last verse or verses. This was the pattern that we used earlier in hymn 174. OR:
2. Begin supportively but with room to grow, and build gently in one or more verses.

Let’s register Hymn 5 using each of these patterns. Take out the simplified version of that hymn and the handout, “Hymn Registration Shortcuts.” Before beginning the hymn, engage the basic registration for jubilant hymns as given in the handout—principals 8, 4, and 2 on the Great, and in the Pedal principal 16 and Great to Pedal. Listen to this sound, and then try it on your organ.

***Hymn 5 High on the Mountain Top, a few beats

At the end of verse 1 or 2 take off the 2-foot principal, and then bring it back on for verse 4. Stop the lesson and try it.

***pause
If you want to involve the chorus mixture instead, use this same procedure but begin with principals 8, 4, 2, and mixture. Retire the mixture after verse 1 or 2, and bring it back for verse 4. Stop the lesson and try it.

***pause

Now for the second pattern, the buildup. Use the same basic registration for jubilant hymns—principals 8, 4, and 2 on the Great, and in the Pedal principal 16 and Great to Pedal. Play verses 1 and 2 in this manner. At the end of verse 2 add the Great mixture. At the end of verse 3, add a chorus reed such as the Trompette 8’. If there is no chorus reed on the Great, prepare the Swell Trompette 8’ before beginning the hymn and pull Swell to Great for verse 4.

[Using the combination action to make registration changes]

All of the registration changes demonstrated so far in this lesson involved only one stop at a time. It is possible to make simple changes like this by hand. It involves three steps:

1. **Get free.** During the long note just before the change, play all three notes by a single hand, if possible, and prepare the free hand at the stop to be added or taken off.
2. **Make the change.** In the break after the release (not before), make the registration change.
3. **Prelocate and play.** After making the change, quickly prepare the free hand over the keys to be played next. This last step—preparing the hand over the next keys to be played—is especially deserving of careful practice.

Making registration changes by hand is a skill that is required of all organists. However, it may be “safer” and more efficient to use the organ’s combination action. The parts of the combination were described in detail near the end of Lesson 1. If you have forgotten about setters, general combination pistons, memory levels, or how to set a combination piston, you may need to review that lesson.

To make a change using the combination action, simply add two steps before the three described above:

1. **Plan and set combinations.** Set the beginning combination on a general combination piston, and write the number in a circle at the top of the page. Set the combination for the first change on another general combination piston, and write the number in a circle at the end of the verse where the change should occur. Continue this process for all changes. Write the stops used for each combination down if needed. Stop the lesson for a moment and set principals 8, 4, and 2 on the Great on combination on general combination piston 1, and add the chorus mixture on general combination piston 2.

***pause

2. **Double-check combinations.** Just before the service, check each of your combinations to be sure that they have not been changed by someone. Stop now and check your two combination pistons.

***pause

3. **Get free.** As described above, but prepare your thumb over the piston instead of the stop to be changed.

4. **Make the change.** In the break, make the change by pressing the piston.
5. **Prelocate and play.** Do exactly as described above. Stop the lesson now, play the last few bars of a jubilant hymn on piston 1, get free and the end of the verse, make the change to piston 2, and prelocate and play the beginning of the next verse.

***pause

All these registration changes should be executed quickly and seamlessly, or not at all. Play all notes of the last chord with one hand and prelocate the other hand over the stop or piston, make the change in the silent moment (that is, after—not before—the keys are released), and return quickly with both hands to the first notes of the next verse. Here is what you do not want to hear

***a registration change executed badly—first, with a “chirp”; second, taking too long; third, leaving out notes and frantic returns

In summary, this has been The New LDS Organist Lesson 9: Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Playing Four Independent Lines in Legato Style. It was the last of four lessons intended for those wanting to learn how to prepare hymns and pieces in polish mode. Make sure that you understand each of these topics, and review them if needed. You were introduced to four forms in which four-part hymns appear on paper, and each one was described and demonstrated in some detail. A three-stage approach to learning four-part hymns and pieces was then described in detail. Finally, you learned about making registration changes in both jubilant and meditative hymns.

Follow up with this lesson by learning to play one or more four-part hymns or arrangements. Using the three-stage approach described in this lesson, continue to listen with care for perfect legato between the tones, well-defined breaks between repeated notes and at phrase breaks, and especially independence of line. If possible, play it for a trained organist or other musician who can help you listen for those qualities. Also, plan registration changes for both meditative and jubilant hymns, and then practice making these changes quickly and seamlessly.

If you have not already done so, study Lesson 10 next, Hymn Playing—Deciding When to Tie Repeated Notes. You will learn how to deal with repeated notes in both shortcut and polish mode. Also, using the organ’s expression pedals will be discussed.

Happy practicing!
This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 10: Hymn Playing—Deciding When to Tie Repeated Notes.

If possible, later in the lesson it will be best to be seated at the organ console. You should have the written materials for this lesson at your fingertips. I am Dr. Don Cook from Brigham Young University.

Lesson 10 is for organists who are playing hymns in both shortcut and polish modes. We will explore options for dealing with repeated notes in either mode, beginning with a very simple, direct approach. Also, you will learn about using the expression pedals of the organ. If you then wish to learn some guidelines that will help you to deal with repeated notes on your own, they will be presented in some detail during the optional second part of the lesson.

The foundations for many of the terms and concepts used in this lesson are laid out earlier in this course. It would be best to know the concepts in lessons 1, 4, and 5 before beginning this one.

The nature of the problem

This lesson would be unnecessary if the music in the hymnbook were organ music. But it is vocal music, and some musical features that work well when the music is sung are not as effective when that same music is played at the organ. Playing notes that repeat in the same voice (“repeated notes”) or that repeat between the voices (“common tones”) is the most important of these features. The constant tone of the organ can make it difficult to distinguish between two repeated tones when playing in legato style. If the space between the tones is too large, it sounds choppy and unmusical—one might say too rhythmic. If the space is too small or if the tones are tied, it sounds over-sustained and indistinct—not rhythmic enough.

Introducing several approaches to making these decisions; first, playing from an arranged score

This lesson will present three ways to deal with repeated notes in hymn playing. The simplest way: either play the repeated notes as written (some hymns are just fine that way); or play from a score that is arranged for organ. Here is a list of resources that contain such arranged scores:

- the hymns included in this course
- Cook Easy Organ Hymn Settings
- Cundick/Cook Three-Stave Hymn Accompaniments
- Carol Dean Hymns from the L.D.S. Hymnal Marked for the Organ
- many of the hymns in Parley Belnap’s Hymn Studies
- hymns prepared by a well-trained organist
This is the approach that we would strongly recommend for the first several weeks or even months of hymn playing in either polish or shortcut mode. This course includes over two dozen hymns arranged for organ, offering limited but immediate help with repeated note treatment. You can use the resources listed above for even more.

Eventually you will want to learn how to make those decisions yourself, but that can come later—as you begin to feel more comfortable at the organ.

Work with your priesthood leaders in selecting hymns from among the resources on that list that are available to you, spending your time learning to play them as well as you can. For now, take the time to look at the example from each of these resources that is included with this course, and compare it with the original score in the hymnbook. Notice how some of the repeated notes are tied, while others are left to be played as written. Some of the many considerations that lead the editor to add those ties are introduced later in this lesson for those who are interested. If you are satisfied with relying on the prepared scores, continue through the next topic and then stop the lesson.

[Dynamic expression via the expression pedals]

The expression pedal (or pedals), introduced in lesson 1, are commonly used in two ways: first, to set the general volume level of the organ; and second, to change the volume level during a piece. When an organ is installed, it is usually voiced—or its volume level adjusted—so that it can be played under normal circumstances with the expression pedal (or pedals)—not the crescendo pedal—fully opened. When playing a congregational hymn, you should be able to open them fully and then (usually) leave them alone throughout the hymn. Adjusting the volume through wise stop choice is standard procedure. If the organ is simply too loud, first try reducing your stop combination (such as removing chorus mixtures, reeds, or 2-foot principal stops). If that does not solve the problem, then try closing the expression pedals slightly—up to one-fourth of the pedal stroke. If that is better, try setting the pedals in that position every time you play congregational hymns, making further volume adjustments by skillful combination of stops. This procedure will help take some of the guess work out of setting the volume for congregational hymn accompaniment.

Use a similar procedure for preludes and postludes, but you should feel freer to change the volume level during the piece. Some composers mark crescendos and diminuendos in the music, and you can follow those markings with the expression pedals. In expressive pieces, even if there are no dynamic markings in the score, it may be appropriate to outline some of the phrases by subtle and tasteful opening and closing of the expression pedals. Here is a short example:

***example of a hymn prelude with crescendo and diminuendo markings—two phrases

Your pedaling plan needs to allow one foot—usually the right foot—to leave the pedal keys whenever it is needed to operate the expression pedal. Sometimes a foot can only be freed up for a moment, but a long crescendo or diminuendo can still be executed. Open or close the expression pedal in several stages with quick and slight taps of the foot, as in the following example:

***Schubert Litany, with the intermittent tapping of the expression pedal to affect the crescendo

In church or classical organ playing, you should never pump the expression pedal back and forth regularly, as is often done on home spinet organs or in some theater organ settings. Observing this very important distinction of style helps to set the stage for worship.
If you have two expression pedals, such as a Swell pedal and a Great/Pedal expression pedal, you can choose to operate them independently or together. To operate them together, place a single foot flat on the crack that separates the two pedals. Be sure that both heel and toe are securely planted. If your organ is equipped with an “All Swells” or “Great/Pedal on Swell” stop tab or thumb piston, this may be accomplished electronically. When engaged, the Swell expression pedal will control the volume of the entire organ.

This concludes our discussion of the simplest way to deal with repeated notes, and using the expression pedals. If you wish to learn about making your own decisions regarding repeated notes, the remainder of this lesson introduces that topic. Otherwise, you can stop this lesson and move on to lesson 11.

[Making decisions on repeated notes; the second way—apply a few rules or guidelines in making your own decisions]

As mentioned earlier, the time will come in your hymn playing when you will want or need to make your own decisions regarding the treatment of repeated notes. But the simplest way—relying on the decisions of others—offers both an easier way of beginning, and a good set of models for making your own decisions.

This brings us to a second, more complex way to deal with repeated notes: apply a few “rules” or guidelines derived by someone else in making your own decisions. Richard Elliott’s section titled “Repeated Notes” in the OrganTutor Workbook, Carol Dean’s rules given at the beginning of her book, and any notes you might have from organ workshops or training sessions are good examples. The remainder of this lesson will offer a few specific guidelines for dealing with repeated notes in this manner.

[The third way—learn the musical results of tying vs. repeating, applying them appropriately in each situation]

But there is a third way to learn how to deal with repeated notes: learn the musical results of various ways to treat repeated notes, listen as you apply them in the hymns, and use the one that seems most appropriate in a given situation. The OrganTutor Organ 101 lesson titled, “Hymn Playing—Repeated Notes” uses this approach. The section in the OrganTutor Workbook titled “Repeated Notes, Tying, and Accent in Hymn Playing” presents several case studies of repeated-note treatment. This approach takes time to learn and apply, but is musically very satisfying. However, we encourage you to wait to pursue this way until after you are rather fluent in the basic techniques and skills introduced in this course.

Before going into any detail, be sure that dealing with the repeated notes takes its proper place as just one step in an effective plan for learning the hymn. You will be most successful marking the score with textual and and musical phrasing before dealing with the repeated notes, and then waiting until afterwards to mark fingering and pedaling.

[The main principles]

To set the stage for the “rules” or guidelines that you can use in making your own decisions, here are the main principles that “fuel” them. Your treatment of repeated notes should:

1. clarify the soprano line (this is most important).
2. It should reflect the relative strength of the beats within the measure.
3. Your treatment of repeated notes should achieve an appropriate balance between rhythm and flow. And:
4. It should reflect the textual phrasing.

Now I will simply list the rules without explanation. After listing them, we will apply them together in playing a hymn.

[The “rules” for those working in both shortcut and polish mode]

First, here are the “rules”—the items that are mostly set in stone. And, by the way, these should be dealt with in this order:
1. Repeated notes between two soprano notes are always repeated (that is, never tied)
2. Repeated notes that occur over a phrase break (in either the text or the music) are usually repeated
3. Common tones between soprano and alto when soprano ascends are tied, and when soprano descends are usually repeated.

In those hymns to be played in shortcut mode, begin by applying those three rules. Mark them in the score, practice each one, and then play and listen. If more tying is needed, tie some of the bass notes. If you tie over barlines, make sure that the beat is clear enough for the congregation to feel the first beat of each measure. Play and listen. In places that still feel choppy, add a tie between tenor or alto repeated notes. If it still feels choppy, learn to play with good independence of line (that is, in polish mode), and that should take care of the problem!

Let’s open the hymnbook to hymn 19, “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” and prepare the score for playing in shortcut mode. Always mark your hymnbook in pencil. Refer also to the handout, “Sample of a Hymn Marked in Shortcut Mode.”

First, let’s identify the spirit of the hymn text and tune. The text is upbeat, but there is some dark contrast in the second verse. The word “brightly” is given, and the tempo is rather quick. While some would play a bright, jubilant hymn in a rather detached style, we will choose to play this and most hymns in a more legato style. We will strike a good balance between a smooth flow and a bright rhythm by choosing our ties carefully.

Before even considering ties, however, be aware that some hymns may not need any tying. Play through the hymn first with no ties. If you feel that some are needed, consider the rules just given, and the guidelines that will be described.

Listen as I play all the repeated notes as written, in legato style.

***19, “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” with no ties, in legato style

Repeating all the repeated notes as written seems too choppy, so we’ll add some ties. The simplest solution in shortcut mode would be adding ties in the bass part, and we will go over that solution in a few moments. But first let’s consider the manual parts.

We begin by applying the three rules. Mark a comma between all soprano notes that are repeated, such as between “thank” and “thee”, “guide” and “us”, “thank” and “thee” again, “light-” and “-en”, and so forth. Next, mark a vertical or diagonal line in the text wherever a phrase break should occur. In this hymn, let’s decide that such a break should occur in all verses after the word “days”, “gospel”, “rays”,
“hand”, and “command”. Finally, we need to identify all the common tones between soprano and alto where soprano ascends, and where soprano descends. The ascending common tones, which should be marked with a tie, occur at or after the syllables “we”, “God”, “to”, “these”, “we”, “send”, “be-” (in line 4), “boun-”, “and” (in line 5), and “love”. For the descending common tones, we’ll mark a straight line between the soprano notes to remind us to play legato, and a comma between the alto common tone to remind us to break. Descending common tones occur at or after the syllables “O”, “proph-”, “-et”, “lat- ”, “for”, “bless-”, “-ing”, between “-te-” and “-ous”, “serve”, “thee”, and “to”. While it is not absolutely critical that these be played precisely when using shortcut mode, having the marks there will make it more likely. Now listen as I play the hymn as we have marked it so far, with the soprano repeated notes and the soprano/alto common tones intact:

***19, soprano repeated notes and soprano/alto common tones intact

This is an improvement, but seems overly busy in the bass part. Tying repeated notes in the bass part of a hymn with so many repeated notes contributes much towards a smoother result. We’ll tie for four beats in the bass at “thank”, for three beats at “proph-et”, between “guide” and “us”, between “these” and “lat-ter”. The patterns that we have all ready treated will reappear throughout the hymn, so go through and mark similar passages in the same way. We’ll also tie unique passages between “light-en our minds”, and in the next-to-last measure, between “love to o-” and “thy com-”. Now listen as I play our final result, with soprano repeated notes and soprano/alto common tones intact, and with ties in the bass as described:

***19, soprano repeated notes, soprano/alto common tones, and bass ties intact

The very frequent soprano/alto common tones in this hymn may seem overwhelming, especially when playing in shortcut mode, so here is a simpler alternative. Play ties in the bass part as just described, allowing the manual parts to be detached where independence is difficult—mainly at the descending common tones. The long notes in the bass created by the ties will help to offer some continuity, even though the manual parts will be detached. It may sound something like this:

***19, bass ties intact, manual parts detached at points of difficulty with independence

Now that you have the hymn marked for playing in shortcut mode, try playing the first two lines from your score. Pull principals 8, 4, and 2 on the Great, and in the Pedal pull the main 16-foot stop and Great to Pedal. Plant your right foot on the center-most D, and your left foot on the low A. Follow as many of the markings in the manual parts as you can, and play the bass part with the ties that you have added. Don’t be too concerned with the details—instead, focus on playing without pauses! Stop the lesson and give it a try.

***pause

Before discussing the guidelines, let’s review. To this point we have covered a few basic principles and rules for dealing with repeated notes. We applied the rules in the manual parts of a hymn, and added ties in the bass part. Because applying the rules as applied in the manual parts may become too complex for playing in shortcut mode, an alternative was presented. In this alternative approach, we play the ties in the pedal part and as many of the marks in the manual part as possible.

The remainder of this lesson explores some guidelines that offer help in a variety of circumstances.

[The “guidelines” for those wishing to go further at this stage]
When you need to make your own decisions on the treatment of repeated notes in hymn playing, first apply the rules given earlier. Then consider adding ties using the following “guidelines”. These are items that you may or may not choose to apply, depending on the specific situation. It will take practice to apply these, but the fine balance between flow and rhythm that can be achieved is worth it. The order of these items is not important:

- **The Barline.** Repeated notes over a barline are usually repeated. Exceptions might considered occasionally in the bass.
- **Strong to weak.** Repeated notes from strong to weak beats are usually tied. The strong beats in 4/4 measures are 1 and 3; in 3/4 it is beat 1; in 6/8 it is the first and fourth pulses. The last beat of the measure, the “upbeat,” can also be rather strong.
- **Weak to strong.** Repeated notes from weak to strong beats are usually repeated.
- **Three or four voices.** When repeated notes occur in three or four voices and some tying is desirable, tie in one or two of the lower voices (often the bass, bass and alto, or the inner voices).
- **Two voices.** When repeated notes occur in two voices and some tying is desirable, tie in one voice.
- **One voice.** When repeated notes occur in only one voice, usually no tying is needed.
- **Drumbeat or drone effects.** If your decisions create a “drumbeat effect”—a pattern that repeats too much, or a “drone effect”—an excessively smooth passage, break up or change the pattern.

Learning to apply these guidelines goes beyond the scope of this course. When the time comes, try dealing with the repeated notes as we have done in this lesson. Mark the repeated notes first according to the three rules. Next, play the hymn without any additional ties. In places where it feels too choppy, try first adding ties in the bass part according to the guidelines. Finally, in places where it still feels too choppy, add ties in the inner parts according to the guidelines. You will find additional help in the OrganTutor workbook and computer tutorial, and in Belnap Hymn Studies.

In summary, this has been The New LDS Organist Lesson 10: Hymn Playing in Polish Mode—Deciding When to Tie Repeated Notes. Three approaches were presented for dealing with repeated notes in hymn playing. The first, either playing the repeated notes as written or playing from a score that is arranged for organ, was strongly recommended for new LDS organists. Learning to use the expression pedals was also discussed. For hymn playing, you were encouraged to determine the best position for these pedals and to leave them in that position throughout. For preludes and postludes, the dynamics of the music can be brought out by subtly and tastefully opening and closing the expression pedals.

For those who want to make their own decisions regarding the treatment of repeated notes, the other two ways were explored. The second way was then introduced, apply a few “rules” or guidelines derived by someone else. Some resources were offered, and then a list of three basic rules was given. We applied these rules in hymn 19, “We Thank Thee, O God, for a Prophet” and prepared the score to that point. Finding that the hymn was still too choppy, we added ties in the bass voice. The more optional guidelines were then introduced. The third way was then presented: learn the musical results of various ways to treat repeated notes, listen as you apply them in the hymns, and use the one that seems most appropriate in a given situation. You were encouraged to wait to explore this way until mastering the more basic hymn playing techniques.

Lesson 11 is next, Playing Postlude Music Appropriately. You will learn how to select and play postlude music in a manner appropriate for the sacrament service. Also, you will learn how to build various types of solo combinations to be for use in prelude and postlude music.

Happy practicing!
Lesson 11: Playing Postlude Music Appropriately

A podcast by Dr. Don Cook, Brigham Young University
Visit <www.organ.byu.edu>

Materials needed: Resources: Easy Prelude and Postlude; Common Stop Names Listed by Family; Hymn 140 (simplified)

This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 11: Playing Postlude Music Appropriately.

If possible, later in the lesson it will be best to be seated at the organ console. You should have the written materials for this lesson at your fingertips. I am Dr. Don Cook from Brigham Young University.

This lesson is important for all organists, whether they are focusing on playing in shortcut or polish mode. It is a companion to Lesson 3, “Playing Prelude Music that Invites the Spirit.” Many of the same concepts apply, but because postlude music comes after the sacrament service, we will cover several important distinctions and considerations. Also, this lesson includes an important registration topic, solo registration (as opposed to chorus registration).

Many of the terms and concepts used in this lesson are introduced in earlier lessons. It would be best to know at least the registration concepts in lessons 1, 2, and 3 before beginning this one.

[Exploring statements in the Church Handbook pertinent to postlude music]

Most of the lessons in this course teach the organ playing skills needed for the sacrament service. Gaining these necessary skills is not usually overseen by priesthood leadership. However, choosing and presenting prelude and postlude music is under the direction of the local priesthood leaders. Probably the most important thing to remember in this regard are the following statements from the Church Handbook of Instructions:

The bishopric oversees ward music.

Stake presidencies and bishoprics determine whether musical selections or instruments are suitable for a particular meeting.

This means that if your bishopric asks the organist to go in a direction contrary to what is taught in this course, their instructions take precedence. The guidelines in the Church Handbook are few, relying on local leadership to deal with the details of music in the sacrament service. Organists who feel most comfortable in their callings are those who have earned the trust of their priesthood leaders by internalizing the guidelines and reflecting them in all they do.

Let us now examine all of the guidelines in the Church Handbook that pertain specifically to postlude music.

Quiet prelude and postlude music creates an atmosphere of worship that invites the Spirit into Church meetings. The organist or pianist usually plays hymns or other appropriate music for five to ten minutes before and after a meeting. Playing hymns helps members review gospel teachings in their minds.
This statement mentions “quiet” postlude music. This stands in some contrast to the louder postlude music that is traditional in many Christian worship environments. If you wish to consider playing a postlude that is not as quiet as the prelude, check your choices against the following standard:

Music in Church meetings should help members worship, feel the sacred spirit of the Sabbath, and feel the spirit of revelation. This music should not draw attention to itself or be for demonstration. . . . Much sacred music that is suitable for concerts and recitals is not appropriate for a Latter-day Saint worship service.

Some postludes that are “solid” and “foundational” but not “loud” might be appropriate. But the line that divides the solid, foundational postlude from one that draws undue attention to itself is indeed tricky to draw—but well worth the effort. The last sentence of the passage above is especially pertinent to those who love the great organ masterworks. Many of those pieces find a much more appropriate place in recitals and concerts, and might be considered for performance in a cultural arts event rather than a sacrament service.

[Registration for postlude pieces]

How does this apply in your choice of stops? In chorus registration, where all hands play on one manual, rely heavily on the softer families of organ stops (flutes, strings, and hybrids). Using them individually and in combination at the 8’ level will often be appropriate. The 8’ principal, alone or in combination with the softer stops, may add the solid foundation that was mentioned earlier. Adding one or two of the softer 4’ stops may also produce a good result for postlude. The 4’ principal is sometimes very telling, and may squeeze the volume level just beyond appropriate. The 2’ principal and the chorus mixture produce a brightness that is often just too loud for postlude in the LDS sacrament service. The soft reeds (Cromorne, Oboe) can serve well when soloed out by either hand (this will be explained in a few moments), accompanied by soft 8’ and 4’ stops. Of course, slightly closing the expression pedal can take the “edge” off from an otherwise too-large combination.

[Choosing music to play for postlude]

Returning now to the choice of pieces, the Handbook states,

Hymns are . . . encouraged for prelude and postlude music, . . . . If other musical selections are used, they should be in keeping with the spirit of the hymns of the Church.

For the reasons given, the Handbook places great emphasis on using the hymns for postlude. Hymns might be played directly from the hymnbook, by rearranging voice parts in the hymnbook, from simplified arrangements, or from “hymn arrangements” that are elaborations on the hymns. These elaborations must be chosen carefully, as they range from very appropriate to completely inappropriate for the sacrament service. The nature of the music itself must be measured against the standards given in the Handbook and any directives from the bishopric.

The spirit of the hymns serves as a model for other music that might be appropriate for postlude. Hymns come in a wide variety of moods: meditative hymns, fervent hymns, majestic hymns, joyful, bright, and jubilant hymns. But there are no virtuosic hymns or toccatas, for example. If a piece of a brighter character is played, remember that

Quiet prelude and postlude music creates an atmosphere of worship that invites the Spirit into Church meetings.
Specifically, what should I play? Here are some possibilities:

**Hymns directly from the hymnbook.**

**Hymns from the hymnbook with rearranged parts: tenor solo, soprano solo, or alto up an octave.**

**Simplified arrangements, such as those included with this course, with these variations: all hands on one manual, soprano solo, or tenor solo.**

**Hymn arrangements that are elaborations on the hymns.** See “Prelude and Postlude Resources.”

Other appropriate music, as described earlier. See “Prelude and Postlude Resources.”

**How long do I play?** Come to the bench and prepare your stops well before the benediction, and begin playing immediately after it is finished. Play one or two pieces for just a few minutes, or longer if specified by the bishopric. It is not necessary to play until everyone has left the chapel, and you should *not* attempt to match the organ volume to the noise level in the room. Instead, set a worshipful, dignified example through your music.

**Can I play the same postlude pieces from week to week?** You should balance several factors. Focus on pieces that you know well, but continue to learn new pieces. Balance tradition and familiarity with variety and freshness. Remain open to postludes that may serve to reinforce the topics of the meeting.

**How do I decide what to play for postlude?** For each week, be aware of the congregational hymns and the topics, themes, or special musical selections of the sacrament service. You might choose a hymn prelude based on the closing hymn or one of the other congregational hymns, or one that reinforces one of the topics of the day. Consider playing more meditative postludes following testimony meetings, or more jubilant postludes around holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

In all of these choices, blend the best of your thinking and planning with your best spiritual preparation. Asking for the divine insight will guide you to appropriate music, to inspiring pieces, and to postludes that might uplift particular individuals. When the postlude is finished, take satisfaction in your best efforts for the day. Also, take stock of areas in which you could improve and work them into your goals for next time. Be sure to avoid any tendency to expect praise from the leadership or congregation members.

[Registration—Solo Combinations]

We now shift our attention to the organ registration topic for this lesson: solo registration. It will be best to be seated at the organ console for the remainder of the lesson.

The word “solo,” in this context, stands in contrast to the word, “chorus.” Chorus registration is used to achieve *equality* between the various voices. All of the voices are played on a single manual, sounding the same stop or combination of stops. *Solo* registration calls for one voice to *stand out.* The solo part is played on one manual with one stop or a combination of stops, while the accompaniment is played on another manual with a softer stop or combination. When a solo is wanted, we use “solo and accompaniment” registration and split the hands between two manuals in this manner.

The accompaniment part of solo and accompaniment registration follows the chorus registration model. Lessons 2 and 4 introduced chorus registration, so review those lessons if needed.
Unless the pedal is playing the solo, it is always balanced to the accompaniment. That means that in nearly all the softer accompaniments that follow, soft 16’ and 8’ stops in the pedal will balance. As an alternative, pull the soft 16’ and whatever coupler copies the accompaniment into the pedal.

The solo part has one main objective: stand out from the accompaniment. This can be accomplished either by tone color, by volume (that is, loudness), by pitch, or a combination of these.

To create a solo by tone color, use a reed (Cromorne, Oboe, or Trompette) in the solo, against 8’ and 4’ flutes, strings, or possibly principals in the accompaniment. In the pedal will be soft 16’ and 8’. For this and all examples, first listen to this example, and then stop the lesson and try it at your own organ.

***Oboe solo, followed by Cromorne solo

In this and any solo combination, a tremulant that affects only the solo manual might be appropriate.

***Oboe solo with trem, followed by Cromorne solo with trem

For another solo by tone color, use an 8’ foundation plus any combination of 4’, 2 2/3’, 2’, and 1 3/5’ stops. These five stops combined are called the “cornet.” Listen to an 8’ and 2 2/3’ solo, with a 4’ stop added later, then the 1 3/5’ stop, and finally the 2’ stop—the full cornet. These can be accompanied by 8’ and 4’ stops.

***8’ and 2 2/3’, then 4’ added, then 1 3/5’, then 2’

Solos by volume need simply to be louder than the accompaniment. The stronger principals, for example, stand out against flutes, strings, and hybrids. Listen to the 8’ principal alone against an 8’ flute accompaniment.

***8’ principal solo, 8’ flute accompaniment

For a rich, sonorous solo, use several blending 8’ stops against a softer 8’ string accompaniment. This is an especially effective solo combination in the tenor range, as is heard in the second half of this example. To create the richest sound, if the solo is on the Great, it may even be useful to pull a Swell to Great coupler.

***Rich 8’ stops for solo, 8’ string accompaniment; first loco, then 8va down

Higher pitches also tend to stand out. Listen to the Great 8’ and 4’ flutes in the right hand against 8’ and 4’ flutes on the Swell. Those played by the right hand are heard as the solo mostly because they are played in a higher range.

***8’ and 4’ flutes in RH, against 8’ and 4’ flutes in the left

8’ and 2’ flutes create a “gap registration,” so-called because the absent 4’ stop creates a “gap.” The 8’ and 2’ combination will predominate against the 8’ and 4’ flutes because of the higher 2’ flute.

***8’ and 2’ flutes in RH, against 8’ and 4’ flutes in the left

In summary, this has been The New LDS Organist Lesson 11: Playing Postlude Music Appropriately.
Passages from the *Church Handbook of Instructions* were cited and discussed, particularly as they applied directly to the choosing and playing of postlude music. A few commonly-asked questions regarding postlude music were also discussed. Solo registration and chorus registration were then compared, and three general ways of creating solos were introduced. We then learned about and heard examples of some effective solo and accompaniment combinations.

The last lesson of this series is next, Lesson 12, Continuing Your Organ Training. You will learn about many options at your disposal to grow as an organist; from internet discussion groups to weekly private lessons. Most importantly, we hope that at least one of those ways will meet your needs, that you will set goals to deepen your skills as an organist, and that you will find joy in learning along the way!

Happy practicing!
This is The New LDS Organist Lesson 12: Continuing Your Organ Training. You should have the written materials for this lesson at your fingertips, but it is not necessary to be seated at the organ console. I am Dr. Don Cook from Brigham Young University.

[The call to serve]

A call to serve in the church as an organist is unique. Whether you are all ready called as an organist or simply preparing to serve, understanding the call is critical. You might think of the call as a tall tree with two deep roots of equal importance. The loss of either one will eventually weaken the tree. The first root is the spiritual side of the call. It draws its nourishment from the Lord Himself, who calls members of the church to serve through His priesthood leaders. Elder Eyring of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles offers three things that one who is called to serve must come to know:

First, you are called of God. The Lord knows you. He knows whom He would have serve in every position in His Church. He chose you. He has prepared a way so that He could issue your call. . . .

. . . The second thing . . . is that the Lord will guide you by revelation just as He called you. You must ask in faith for revelation to know what you are to do. . . .

There is a third thing you need to know: Just as God called you and will guide you, He will magnify you. You will need that magnification. Your calling will surely bring opposition. . . . There will be times when you will feel overwhelmed. One of the ways you will be attacked is with the feeling that you are inadequate. Well, you are inadequate to answer a call to represent God with only your own powers. But you have access to more than your natural capacities, and you do not work alone. (Ensign, November 2002)

The second, and also very important root is musical training. Few callings require more training in addition to learning gospel principles than the calling of organist. As you know, it usually takes many years of training to learn music before fingers or feet ever touch the organ keyboards; and even more years of training and experience to reach true mastery. But is mastery really desirable? Consider these statements. First, from Elder Boyd K. Packer, who leaves no room to question the importance of our callings:

Music is of enormous importance in our worship services. I believe that those who choose, conduct, present, and accompany the music may influence the spirit of reverence in our meetings more than a speaker does. God bless them. (Ensign, November 1991)

Elder Dallin H. Oaks recognizes the need for a skill level that will allow us to play in a flowing manner:

We depend on our choristers and organists to lead us at the prescribed pace. Too slow or too fast can detract from a worshipful mood. (Ensign, November 1994)

And President Gordon B. Hinkley inspires us to rise above mediocrity:
I speak of the need for a little more effort, a little more self-discipline, a little more consecrated effort in the direction of excellence in our lives.

This is the great day of decision for each of us. For many it is the time of beginning something that will go on for as long as you live. I plead with you: don’t be a scrub! Rise to the high ground of spiritual, mental, and physical excellence. You can do it. You may not be a genius. You may be lacking in some skills. But so many of us can do better than we are now doing. We are members of this great Church whose influence is now felt over the world. We are people with a present and with a future. Don’t muf your opportunities. Be excellent. 

(Ensign, September 1999)

[What kind of training do you need?]  

There are many different ways to “be excellent”—to sharpen your skills as an organist. Before committing yourself to one, however, decide what sort of organist you will become. You may have very limited time right now to dedicate to organ practice and study, yet you would like to perform the duties of your calling in a respectable manner. On the other hand, you may be able to spend several hours per week increasing your skill level and building your repertoire. Or perhaps something in your experience has inspired you to pursue serious organ study, and you can dedicate ten or more hours per week in practice and study. Skill level and time available are two of the most important factors to consider. There are at least three others. For your reference, take the time right now to answer these five questions as they apply to you at this time in your life:

1. What sort of organist will you become?
2. How much time per week can you dedicate to organ practice and study?
3. Do you prefer to learn in a small class situation, private lessons, on your own, or in a combination of these ways?
4. What practice organ can be made available to you? and 5. What financial resources are available to you for organ study?

You will be happiest in your continued study when your goals as an organist—including the answers to these questions—are in harmony with the ways that you decide to continue your training. So after you answer them, find out which of the available training options are the best match for your situation. Let’s explore some of the best options.

[Find out what is available in your community; options for continued training]

The first, and most obvious possibility, would be to finish this course. If you needed to skip lessons 6 through 9, which focus on learning hymns in polish mode, taking the time to work through those lessons would be an excellent “next step.” You can do this on your own or, even better, with the assistance of a qualified private or group organ instructor. Where can you find such assistance?

Local communities vary widely in their abilities to provide organ training, as do the local church areas, stakes, and wards. First, find out if priesthood-directed training is available in your own ward, stake, or area. Contact your ward music chairman or bishopric first; and then the stake music chairman, stake music adviser (a high councilor), or stake presidency.

The instructions from the Church Handbook regarding music training state:

With the approval of priesthood leaders, stake and ward music chairmen may arrange for music training courses, seminars, and workshops. They may recommend to priesthood leaders the names of qualified instructors who could provide this training. Training may also be provided to individuals as needed. No fee is charged for Church-sponsored training.
Church-sponsored training can often be tailored to organists of various backgrounds and goals, and with various levels of time commitment. The small-class format is most common, but sometimes they may be able to provide free private lessons. Most stakes will arrange to provide key access for practice on the church organ (the Stake President has this prerogative). And, as mentioned above, no fee is charged for Church-sponsored training.

If your stake or ward does not provide such training, you might consider making a request. However, you may need to seek out training that is not sponsored by the church. Such training will usually involve professionals who must charge a fee—and the Church Handbook makes allowance for fee-based lessons held in church buildings:

When there is no reasonable alternative, priesthood leaders may authorize the use of meetinghouse pianos and organs for practice, paid private instruction, and recitals involving members of the units that use the meetinghouse.

Private instruction by a well-qualified organ instructor is a time-honored approach that has many benefits. The individual accountability and the fee provide motivation to practice regularly. The instructor can focus on your particular needs. Also, the interactions and friendships between teacher and student can enrich the lives of both.

The most valuable resource for finding qualified organ instructors is a referral from a trusted organist. The BYU organ faculty maintains a growing list online at <www.organ.byu.edu>. The local chapter of the American Guild of Organists—the AGO—can also provide referrals. For a list of local AGO chapter deans, visit <www.agohq.org/regional/index.html>. Organist hired by local colleges and large churches may also provide useful referrals.

If you would like the idea of private lessons in cooperation with a BYU Independent Study organ course, there are six levels of courses available. These courses are designed to provide motivation and instruction by working towards specific goals in technique, hymn playing, repertoire, organ registration, music theory, etc. Levels 1 and 2 are each available in free “self-study” versions and low-cost “certificate” versions (Music 71 and 72); or in college-credit versions (Music 399R sections 1 and 2). For more information on these courses, visit <www.organ.byu.edu/handout_programs.pdf>.

The main text for Levels 1 and 2 of the Independent Study organ courses is OrganTutor Organ 101, a computer-based resource for instruction in manual and pedal technique, hymn playing, and organ registration. A workbook of nearly 300 pages contains written exercises, studies, and instructions that were originally designed for the BYU group organ classes. OrganTutor is best used with the support of a private or group instructor, where students can use the video and audio examples, the extensive text and graphics, and self-testing to make more efficient use of the time between lessons or classes. More information can be found at <www.organtutor.byu.edu>.

Other method books offer valuable help to those who enjoy learning on their own. Hymn Studies for Organists by Dr. Parley L. Belnap is a course in hymn playing designed specifically for LDS organists. He provides meticulous instruction, fingering and pedaling in the first hymns. As one works through the book and more advanced topics are covered, the details are gradually left behind. For more information, search “Hymn Studies for Organists” on the Internet.

For those attending BYU Provo, private lessons are available (Music 160R), group organ instruction (Music 115, 116R), and other organ courses for the non-music major. BYU-Idaho has similar offerings by excellent instructors. BYU also has strong undergraduate and graduate programs for the organ major, with intensive training in performing the organ masterworks, in hymn playing, organ registration, history, theory, organ pedagogy, etc. Visit <www.organ.byu.edu> for more information.
Workshops, seminars, and weekend training events are occasionally offered by local AGO chapters, BYU, or other organizations. Watch for announcements of training-oriented events by your local AGO chapter, which is very interested in promoting the art of organ playing. BYU hosts the BYU Organ Workshop each year in early August, which attracts hundreds of LDS organists for an intensive four-day workshop. Its classes and events center on the requirements of the Independent Study organ courses, although enrollment in these courses is not necessary. The opportunity to associate with other LDS organists of similar interests is particularly valuable. Visit <organworkshop.byu.edu> for more information.

Numerous other resources are available. Three important Internet sites provide ready access to many of these resources:

1. The Organ Study at BYU Website <www.organ.byu.edu>, which is directly associated with this course and with all organ instruction offered by the university.
2. The American Guild of Organists website <www.agohq.org>, which has an extensive online store with educational materials. And
3. Pipe Organs and Related Topics <www.albany.edu/piporg-l/>, which is an excellent gathering place for everything related to the organ. Of particular interest are the links, “Individual Organs and Organ Tours,” and “Publications and Discographies.”

In summary, this has been The New LDS Organist Lesson 12: Continuing Your Organ Study. The lesson began with a brief discussion of the call as an organist, and a reminder of the great potential for good that accompanies that call. You were then lead through a series of questions designed to help determine what kind of training is most appropriate for you at this time. Several possible ways of receiving organ instruction were then explored, including church-sponsored training, private instruction, BYU Independent Study organ courses, and more.

Most importantly, this lesson marks the end of only the beginning. We hope that this introductory course has helped you catch the vision of the organ world that will lead you into a lifetime of fascination, learning, and service as an organist. We challenge you to take the time now to decide which form of continued study best meets your needs, and to make arrangements today to get started.

Happy practicing!