The Pianist as Music Minister

Technically Speaking:

1. “Let me be clear Brethren”: Communicate with your cantor by discussing/practicing
   a. Follow the Psalmist
   b. Agree on for hymns/songs—Introductions, endings (how to’s, esp. communion),
      number of verses, tempos, holds, pauses, even dynamics.

2. “Wherever You Lead, I’ll Go”: Leading Congregational Singing
   a. Know thyself—*and to thine own self be true*: Don’t try to do what is out of your
      capability—Be that Cornerstone—Rock Solid/Confident (lead and they will follow).
   b. Tempo—Sing it to yourself: If you can’t sing the phrase, they can’t sing the phrase
      and the tempo may be too slow. If the text sounds like you’re ‘speaking in tongues’
      and you know you’re not supposed to be, it’s probably too fast. If you’re wading in a
      sea of molasses, bogged down by ‘emoting,’ you’re probably losing them vocally and
      spiritually.
   c. “Keep it simple, sometimes”: Know when to simplify the musical accompaniment
      and when to build or change it up—intensifying the prayer/praise (broken chords
      (arp.), octaves, changing the harmony, emphasizing beats, a cappella); follow where
      the Spirit leads.
   d. Know your congregation: What leads them to full, active and conscious
      participation?

3. Know the Piano:
   a. Utilize tone colors—different octaves, alternate chords.
   b. Utilize the percussive quality—multicultural spiritual music may call for more
      rhythmic patterns; again, do what is within your capacity.
   c. Practice—keep your skills up. You cannot share what you do not have (we should
      always be growing in our skill set for ministering through our accompanying.)

4. “Let it go, let it go...”—We are only human and sometimes, even with preparation, we
   make mistakes. Letting go and refocusing our efforts, allowing the Spirit to guide us, is
   pleasing to God who gave us the gifts we share and loves us in our human weakness and
   humility.
Liturgically Speaking:

1. “Ask and it shall be given, seek and ye shall find”—Make sure you communicate with your Presider about anything you are unclear about (or any changes or differences) for a liturgy (Is there a Sprinkling Rite? Is there a Litany of Saints for the Baptism...any special sung acclamations or dialogues the musicians should know about); Weddings, funerals, Confirmations, Reconciliation Services, Evening prayer, Taize prayer, XLT, Adoration—know what is needed for special services and don’t be afraid to ‘double check.’

2. Read the Readings for the Mass/Service—be connected to the Word, whether you are choosing the music or not. Your connection with the Word will feed into your connection with the text of the hymns/songs.

Spiritually Speaking:

1. Pray before you Play—whether it’s with your cantor or choir or individually, ask for the Holy Spirit to guide you in leading your congregation to that “Encounter with Christ.”

2. “More of You, Lord, Less of Me”—It’s not about me, but turning myself over to the Holy Spirit, to be an ‘instrument’ of the Lord’s love. At the heart of music ministry is that call to offer our gifts and talents to God and God’s people. Pray to play in such a way that God’s people are encouraged to raise their voices in praise and open their hearts and minds to the voice of God, drawing them ever deeper into that close relationship with Christ and each other as the Body of Christ.