

Worth 1,000 Words

Linda Everhart

YOU'RE AN organist, not a professional photographer. But at least once a month, someone asks you for a photo to use in the church newsletter, on your Facebook page, in an e-blast, or for one of the publications of the American Guild of Organists.

You may be one of the many people now carrying a camera everywhere as part of your smartphone equipment. So, here are a few simple tips that will help you take a better photo when you find yourself pressed into duty as an event photographer. Many thanks to the chancel choir of the Coraopolis United Methodist Church in Coraopolis, Pa., and their director Alastair Stout, for helping to illustrate these photo tips. All the photos were taken by an amateur photographer using an iPhone 5 in available light.

Tip 1: Get closer to your subject

This is probably the biggest single thing you can do to improve your photos. To get closer, it's important to move physically closer and not depend on your zoom. Just take a step or two closer to your subject. If you are using a smartphone, don't use your zoom, because that will degrade the resolution of your image and make it unsuitable for publication. Don't count on a photo editor to crop out garbage from your picture.



Tip 1: Subjects seem remote because they are too far away from the camera.

Tip 2: Avoid a lineup

Try to avoid lining people up in a straight line. They seem friendlier and more approachable when they're not in a lineup. Photos come to life when the viewer's eye moves from one corner of the picture to the opposite corner. By arranging your subjects on the diagonal, your pictures can suddenly come alive.

Tip 3: Find a better angle

Good photographers are always looking for a better angle on their subject. You can move around to avoid distractions in the foreground or background and to find a flattering angle on your subject. Try shooting from unexpected angles—from below, from above, or even at a tilt for a whimsical feeling. Don't be afraid to ask a group to move or to pose for a photograph. Most people understand the importance of good publicity and are happy to cooperate.

Sometimes, you will have to ask your subjects to move to get into better lighting. Flash seldom produces a satisfying result in a dark space. So, try to position your subjects so that light is falling *evenly* on everyone. High-contrast shots combining bright and dark or shady areas are often a photographer's headache.



Tip 1: Getting closer lets us see emotion.



Tip 2: The group looks a little stiff in a straight line.



Tip 2: This group looks like it's a lot more fun.



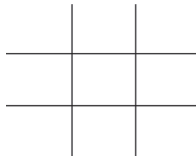
Tip 3: The photographer probably should have moved to a different angle.



Tip 3: The subject is closer and we do not have to look at the back of the heads of the audience.

Tip 4: Frame your subject off-center

Try moving your subject to the right- or left-hand third of the frame, and see how much more interesting the shot becomes. Perhaps you've noticed a set of cubes that divide your smartphone camera into a 3 x 3 grid. The grid is designed to help you employ the "Rule of Thirds," a compositional guideline that



recommends placing important elements along the lines. The second photo of the woman seated at the piano (below) was composed using the camera's compositional grid, placing the subject on the line on the left.

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Tip 4: This dead-center framing feels flat.



Tip 4: Moving your subject to the right or left of the frame can make your shot much more interesting.