

Preparing To Move

Like any exercise, muscles that you haven't used for a while may let you know when they have been stretched. Wrists, arms, backs and necks, not used to waving banners and moving, may react. If, in a fit of passion you overdo it, just treat them gently and exercise them sensitively the next day and they will strengthen over time.

To avoid any unnecessary straining of muscles, it is a good idea to warm up. Just as singers warm up their voice to strengthen and protect it, we can warm up our bodies for active worship. A natural way to do this is to start worshipping gently and build up to more exuberance. However you can also strategically move to prepare your body. What follows are some recommended warm-up and stretching exercises to help you achieve this.

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Warm-Up

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Try walking about the room and incorporate:

Shaking out and moving all the bits of your body that will be activated – fingers, wrists, arms, shoulders and legs.

1. Rotating shoulders both forwards and backwards. Gently move your arms in circles from bent (soft) elbows progressing to straight arm circles.
2. Alternately reaching arms out, both in front of the body and upwards (as in worship).
3. Conclude your warm-up with some gentle head rolls and head turns. These are best done in a stationary position and will lead directly into the stretching sequence.



Wielding Banners

How

Stretching

Stretching relates to your flexibility, the point of your joints. It is not necessary to have this flexibility and so prevent us from moving to the best of our ability. The aim of regular stretching is to enhance the muscle's ability to extend more fully, thus allowing the joints to move more freely. The who, what, when, where, why and how of banners in the hands of Christians

These are the gentle stretching exercises I recommend:

1. Chest and Biceps Stretch

Lace fingers behind back and squeeze shoulder blades together. Slowly raise and straighten arms.



2. Electronic Version

Gently pull on the left elbow with right hand until a stretch is felt along the back of the left upper arm. Repeat with opposite arm.



3. Neck Stretch

Grasp right arm above wrist with your left hand and pull downward and left across body. Tilt head to left. Repeat with opposite arm.



4. Shoulder stretch

Stretch arm above head, cradle elbow with hand and gently pull elbow behind the head. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat several times.



5. Wrist stretch

Interlace fingers, palms outward and straighten arms in front. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat several times.



6. Upper and lower back stretch

Interlace fingers and turn palms upward, above head, straighten arms, then slowly lean slightly from side to side from your waist.



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