

**Christ's Church Choir**

# **Choir Handbook**

**2016-17**

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# Christ's Church Choir Handbook 2016-17

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## Staff of Christ's Church

**The Rev. Canon Susan C. Harriss**, *Rector* (until September 15)

**The Rev. Sanford A. Key**, *Associate Rector*

**The Rev. Dn. Dorothee R. Caulfield**, *Parish Secretary & Deacon*

**Don Chadeayne**, *Sexton*

**Vickie Cox**, *Finance Office*

**Mary McCarthy**, *Communications Officer & Director of CCE*

**Crispian Thorne**, *Vergers*

**Lisa Pearson**, *Director of CCNS*

## Music Staff

**Ruaraidh Sutherland**, *Organist & Choirmaster*

**TBA**, *Alto Staff-singer*

**Jon Garrow**, *Tenor Staff-singer*

**Antoine Hodge**, *Bass Staff-singer*

**Nate Repasz**, *Tenor staff-singer*

**Simon Riker**, *Bass staff-singer, and Assistant Choirmaster*

**Glyn Ziemacki**, *Choir Librarian*

## Music Committee

**John Clark**, *(Chair)*

**Judi Allen**, **Barbara Brunner**, **Lisl Dunlop** (*Vestry Liaison*), **Julia Lloyd**, **Simon Riker** (*Secretary*), **Sally Lee**,

**James Thresher**, **Glyn Ziemacki**

## WELCOME

Music continues to be an integral part of life at Christ's Church, Rye. Anglican worship has been offered since the late 17th Century, making us one of the oldest Episcopal congregations in the USA. This handbook is intended to help choristers, adult singers, parents and supporters become acquainted with the operation and routine of the music department, and to answer any questions that you may have.

## OUR PURPOSE

A warm welcome to all new and returning choir singers and choir families! This handbook is intended to help acquaint all with the operations of the music ministry at Christ's Church, and to be a useful source of information for anyone involved in the choir program. It is both an honor and a privilege for us to participate in this vibrant music ministry.

This handbook is to be taken home and read carefully.

## OUR CHOIRS

The **Christ's Church Choir** (boy and girl choristers, adults) is the principal choir of the parish and who sing at the majority of our liturgies. The choristers are trained to the high standards and are treated as professional musicians. The adults are an experienced and dedicated group of professional singers and volunteers who travel from a wide area, and who rejoice in their fellowship and ministry. We are the only intergenerational choir in Westchester.

The **Christ's Church Singers** are drawn from members of the congregation that can't commit to the full Christ's Church Choir schedule, yet still wish to share their musical gifts in worship. The choir is anchored by our team of staff-singers and sings several times a year.

The **Christ's Church Cherub Choir** (boys and girls ages 4-7) exists to instill a love and excitement for singing sacred music in the hearts and minds of young children, and to prepare them to eventually join the ranks of Christ's Church Choristers. They sing several times a year, principally at Christmas and Easter.

## WEEKLY SCHEDULE

### Wednesday:

Facilities open 3:00 p.m. to 6:15 p.m.

Novice Choristers 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Probationer Choristers 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Junior Choristers 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. (4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. if Evensong)

Senior Choristers 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

**Evensong at 5:30 p.m. (first Wednesdays of the month – see schedule)**

### Thursday:

Facilities open from 6.30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Junior/Senior Choristers 7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Adult Choir 7:15 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.

### Sunday:

Vesting and preparation from 8.30 a.m.

Full Choristers 9:00 a.m.

Adult Choir 9:00 a.m.

**Holy Eucharist or Morning Prayer at 10:00 a.m.**

The full Christ's Church Choir usually sings on the 1st, 3rd and 4th Sundays of the month, with adults only on the 2nd and 5th Sundays. Occasional changes are noted in the Forward Dates. Any services that fall on weekdays and Sunday afternoons have their own rehearsal times. Again, please check the Forward Dates carefully.

## CHOIR COMMITMENT

A music program such as that at Christ's Church cannot function without the goodwill of volunteers and the support of families. The Rector and Organist are grateful for all that members of the program offer in supporting the rehearsal and performance schedule, without which the maintenance of high standards of music would be difficult. We could not continue to stretch and motivate each other otherwise.

Due to the enormous amount of music covered each week, it is hard for a singer not to fall behind even after missing only one rehearsal. It is understood that required job or academic obligations may require the singer to be absent from a rehearsal or an event. However, please understand that in making the commitment to the choir program the singer must choose to place their commitment to the choir above other extracurricular activities.

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

## **General**

- All singers are expected to strive for perfect attendance; however, an 80% attendance record over the year is considered the minimum. Should choristers (child or adult) fall below this, a meeting will be called to discuss their commitment to the program
- A three week notice period is required for absence, unless through illness

## **Punctuality**

- Singers should plan to arrive at least 10 minutes before each rehearsal
- Arriving on time is an individual responsibility, but one that contributes to the success and spirit of the entire ensemble. Parents should negotiate conflicts, taking into consideration the choir schedule and attendance standards

## **Severe weather conditions**

- In the event of inclement weather, severe weather decisions will be made by 12:00 noon of the rehearsal day. The receptionist of the church office will have the most recent information concerning a decision

## **Recruitment**

- The success of our choirs is dependent on a solid group of participants. Please invite your friends to give the choir a try!

# **PRACTICE / SIGHT-READING CLASSES**

Due to the amount of music covered in the course of each year, adult members of the choir will be expected to learn some of their music outside of rehearsal times. Sight-reading classes take place on Saturday mornings throughout the year to address matters of theory.

## **ROYAL SCHOOL OF CHURCH MUSIC (RSCM)**

“The RSCM supports a worldwide network of 8,500 churches, schools and individuals. We are committed to achieving the best use of good music in worship – whatever the resources, whatever the styles. Through education, training, publications, advice and encouragement, we aim to support church music today and to invest in church music for the future.”

### *RSCM America website*

In 1945, the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) was founded in England and has since grown to become an international and ecumenical organization with more than 11,000 affiliates throughout the world. The Royal School of Church Music in America is a branch of this world-wide network and shares the common goal of promoting effective and inspiring music-making in worship and in the wider community. As an affiliate of the RSCM, the Christ’s Church Choir is committed to nurturing young choristers and developing a sense of community as we work toward the highest musical standards.

If you wish to know more about requirements, please speak directly to the Director of Music.

## **DRESS AND BEHAVIOR GUIDELINES**

- Choir members are asked to show discretion in their Sunday best
- Dark socks/stockings (absolutely no other colors will be accepted)
- Black shoes (which can be kept at church)

Any informal clothing should not be evident when wearing vestments.

Program members should always remember that they are the public face of worship, and attire must be appropriate to their duty as leaders.

We also want visitors to take away a good report of our worship and disposition.

For any outside events or choir tours/trips, smart clothing is required.

## **Choir Room and Church (*rehearsal and general*)**

- No talking during rehearsal
- For important questions, raise your hand
- Do your absolute best at all times
- No food or drink (water excepted, although please be careful)
- Make sure you have the correct music before rehearsal begins
- Always have your music, hymnal, and pencil with you
- Arrive on time at the beginning of rehearsal, after breaks, and between sectional rehearsals
- Put music away after end of rehearsal
- Leave all backpacks (and other things) in the hallway

During all breaks Choristers are strictly forbidden from going beyond the vicinity of the choir room unless under direct adult supervision.

## **Mobile Phone Use**

- Cell phones are not allowed in rehearsals and services
- Limited cell phone use is permitted during breaks

## **MUSIC THEORY**

Specifically, choristers learn about pitch notations, rhythm notation, intervals, scales, key signatures, time signatures, chords, and harmony and sight singing. Understanding music theory helps choristers become better musicians, assists in communicating the music as fully as possible, so enhancing the entire musical experience.

## **CHORAL REPERTOIRE**

Christ's Church offers boys and girls an opportunity to sing great choral music that spans six centuries of composition.

- Renaissance period (1450-1600)
- Baroque period (1600- 1750)
- Classical period (1750-1820)
- Romantic period (1820-1910)
- Contemporary period (1910-present)

In addition to singing a broad-based classical repertoire, choristers sing a variety of spirituals and world music. Our choristers also enjoy singing in a variety of languages including English, Latin, French and German.

# LEVELS OF ACHIEVEMENT & INCENTIVES

Choristers are guided through Levels of Achievement as they study singing, music theory and leadership. These milestones are important way-points in the chorister's journey: the process of training and development is ongoing, and any treble line represents a range of skill and experience: older children are likely to be asked to take a leadership role, and to perform the complex solos and semi-choruses, but younger members also have an important job to do, and are equally valuable members of the team.

Promotion from one level of achievement to the next is contingent on mastering specific skills and knowledge as well as meeting attendance and conduct requirements. Attendance, attitude and conduct are assessed by a Standards System where points are earned by individual choristers as they participate in rehearsals, services, and concerts. By the end of the choir season, students participate in a formal ceremony where they are recognized and promoted, receiving surplices, badges and ribbons.

The Level of Achievements are listed below along with the vestment, ribbon and badge that represent each level.

- Novice / Probationary Chorister *cassock*
- Junior Chorister *surplice*
- Senior Chorister *light and dark blue ribbons and RSCM badge*
- Corner Boy/Girl *red ribbon and RSCM badge*
- The Head Chorister *yellow ribbon and special RSCM badge*

The **Head Chorister** assists the Choirmaster in working with the choristers, and in carrying out various tasks, including:

- The Head Chorister (along with Corner Boys/Girls) organizes the choristers before and after services
- Lead the standing and sitting of the choir during services
- Help with the training of younger choristers during choir practices
- Be an outstanding role model, both musically and in their department

**Corner Boys/Girls** assist the Head Chorister in various tasks

- Leading their 'team' of choristers
- Support the Head Chorister in his/her duties
- Set an excellent example to younger children, both musically and in their department
- Leading by example
- Assisting the choirmaster with routine tasks
- Learning leadership skills through reading in services, observations, discussion, and experience
- Inspiring younger choristers to do their best and obtain leadership positions

## **CHORISTER ALLOWANCE**

As part of their educational experience, students receive a Chorister Allowance which is distributed four times a year on All Saints, Christmas, Easter and Trinity. The pay rate begins at \$5.00 per month for Novice and Probationary Choristers, and as students are promoted from one level of achievement to the next they receive a pay raise. Junior Choristers start at \$7.50 per month, Senior Choristers \$10.00 per month, with Corner Boys/Girls and the Head Chorister receiving between \$10.00 and \$15.00 per month respectively.

In addition, choristers can receive 'extras' (for perfect attendance as an example, or an excellently sung solo, or excellent work in a rehearsal) as well as fines (for tardiness on Sunday morning as an example) that will affect their net allowance at the end of the month. Bonuses are also offered for excellent attendance throughout the busy seasons of Christmas and Easter.

The Choir allowance is a tool to help instill a sense of accountability, money management and church stewardship for each chorister.

## **SUMMER CAMP OPPORTUNITIES**

Christ's Church has begun holding our own Choir Camp during August. Musically, choristers rehearse daily and work on musicianship skills like sight reading and music theory, as well as opportunities to build community through swimming, rope courses, recreation, and arts and crafts. Please keep an eye out for further information.

## **TRIPS AND TOURS**

In addition to singing for weekly liturgies at Christ's Church, the choir undertakes several trips during the year, giving the choir opportunities to sing in a variety of venues throughout the northeast. We will next visit the UK in 2018, where they will be in residence at Truro Cathedral, Cornwall, as well as visiting our sister parish in Rye, Sussex.

## **CHOIR AWARDS**

On the final Choral Evensong of choir term the following choir awards prizes are usually presented:

**RECOGNITION OF NEW CHORISTERS** (*welcoming of new choristers*)

**DEACON'S PRIZE** (*most improvement in first year chorister, of any level*)

**CHOIRMASTER'S PRIZE** (*best attendance throughout the year*)

**RECTOR'S PRIZE** (*greatest number of points earned throughout the year*)

**MUSICIANSHIP AWARD** (*awarded to the most musically promising chorister*)