



St. Andrew's Episcopal Church

THE CHORISTER PROGRAM

WELCOME!

Welcome to the St. Andrew's Music Program. The principle mission of the choirs is to offer praise to God through leadership in music and liturgy. The first responsibility of every choir member is to be a leader in the worship life of St. Andrew's Church.

Our choirs represent a tradition of music-making that has been at the center of the Anglican Church since the 16th century. In addition, we honor the historic role of boys and girls in leading worship through singing at a high level of excellence. To that end, St. Andrew's Church maintains a membership in The Royal School of Church Music in America (RSCM).

The St. Andrew's Choristers maintain a consistent schedule of rehearsals and services. They learn to read music quickly and to understand what they are singing. They receive professional training in the fundamentals of music, including sight-reading, ear-training, and music theory.

Choristers develop skills that last a lifetime and help them in other aspects of their lives. They also tend to love working together and to develop strong friendships. (For more detailed information on the Chorister Program, see below)



DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

The St. Andrew's Choristers consists of boys and girls ages eight to sixteen who love to sing. They are responsible for providing the music for the 10:30 am service two to three times a month from September through May as well as various other services scheduled during the choir season.

The boys and girls enjoy being a part of a well thought-out program of music instruction. Our goal is for the choristers to experience the interpretation and performance of music as a spiritually powerful and joyful means of expression. To that end, we encourage a high level of musical independence and insight through careful teaching and rehearsing. Each rehearsal includes training in basic sight-reading, proper signing technique, and many other musical skills. With the help of the Choirmaster, frequent opportunities will be allowed for each chorister to measure personal advancement through the levels of the Chorister Training Program of the RSCM.

The choristers are taught in small groups according to their age and vocal experience. Each group works toward the completion of a test card which involves the learning of specific musical skills as well as memorization of parts of the Episcopal service. After the completion of each of the test cards, they are promoted into the next level in a small ceremony in the Sunday service. In the beginning levels, much of the emphasis is on the acquiring of musical skills and vocal expertise. In a relatively short time, the younger choristers are able to develop a fine singing voice and the ability to sight-read music - resulting in thinking musicians. In the upper levels, more detailed attention is given to rehearsing the music they will be singing on Sunday morning as well as other special services. The various levels are described in some detail below.

It is our belief that being a part of the chorister program is also about practicing responsibility and commitment. We stress the importance of displaying a superior attitude and excellent manners during all rehearsals and on Sundays as well as maintaining an excellent attendance record. In addition, each chorister must take responsibility for the proper care of his or her own hymnal, music folder and vestments. Attendance, attitude, team-work and cooperation are the key elements in determining success, satisfaction, and enjoyment in the choir.

The St. Andrew's Chorister training program for boys and girls embodies the essence of the Royal School of Church Music philosophy developing:

- teamwork and communication skills;
- self-discipline, focus and concentration
- self-esteem and spiritual growth

These attributes will benefit the young singers throughout their lives.

ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

Attendance at all rehearsals, services, and other functions of the choirs is expected. Any exceptions should be discussed with the Choirmaster as far in advance as possible. If for any reason a Chorister must be absent from rehearsals or service, please call (or text) Phil at 717-723-5560 or email at philtdc@yahoo.com. Every choir member is expected to be present and on time for every choir event. Please do everything possible to honor your choir commitment. Remember if you show up for 10:00am rehearsal at 10:00am you are already late. The commitment to the choir is one that should be taken very seriously by participants with the support of their families. Attention to faithful attendance, punctuality, and diligence ensures good morale within the choir and for each chorister. Please remember: Regular attendance is **VITALLY IMPORTANT** for each of the choristers. When they miss even one rehearsal or a Sunday service, they miss valuable instruction and singing experience and everyone misses them!

Exemplary Choristers.....

- ❖ Demonstrate by example the goals of the Music Program.
- ❖ Work hard.
- ❖ Exhibit excellent attendance and punctuality.
- ❖ Arrive to rehearsals with enough time to get ready to sing (5-10 minutes early to gather music and hymnal, a pencil, and a drink of water).
- ❖ Help to recruit new choristers.
- ❖ Disseminate performance information.
- ❖ Treat fellow choristers with respect and kindness.
- ❖ Help younger choristers in need.
- ❖ Work toward individual achievement for the benefit of the entire choir.

Parental support is always needed and encouraged. Your help is always very much appreciated!

CHRISTIAN FORMATION

In addition to musical training, the RSCM program provides an opportunity for Christian formation in developing discipline, church attendance, spiritual habits, and being stewards of time, talents, and resources. The regular participation in liturgical worship is an experience of ritual, tradition, and spirituality.

RED LETTER DAYS FOR ALL CHOIR PERSONNEL

A **red letter** day is a day when attendance is **absolutely mandatory** for all choir personnel. These are days when there are particularly important services where there may be an unusual amount of music or a special service at another church where **absolutely everyone** is needed. These times are marked with **bold red text** in the schedule. Please note these particular days on your calendar as soon as possible to avoid any conflicts.

INCLEMENT WEATHER GUIDELINES

St. Andrew's Choirs will announce rehearsal cancellations due to snow or severe weather by 2:00 p.m. of the rehearsal day. The receptionist of the church office will have the most recent information concerning a decision or if in doubt, you can text the Organist & Choirmaster. Sunday services are rarely cancelled.

The Choristers Levels of Achievement

1. Probationer - This is the level where all new choristers begin. Probationers come to all the weekly rehearsals and Sunday services. They are given a cassock and sit with the choir where they will show that they can sit well and pay attention and follow the service. Probationers must also show that they can follow directions well and display good manners at all times. They must pass a blue test card in order to be promoted.

2. Novice Singer - When the Probationer becomes a full member of the choir, he or she is given a surplice in a formal ceremony in the service on Sunday morning and becomes a Novice Singer. This is the level where much of the basic musical training takes place.

3. Junior Singer - Basic musical training is continued in this level with a stronger emphasis on sight-reading. Occasionally, Choristers in this level will rehearse some hymns and small sections of anthems. They wear the RSCM medal with a light blue ribbon.

4. Senior Singer - The choristers in this level can sing some of the music we perform after detailed rehearsal. They have learned a lot of the basics by this point and they continue the work toward becoming strong leaders in the music we do. They wear the RSCM medal with a dark blue ribbon.

5. Junior Chorister - The choristers in this level give a strong lead in all that we do. This is a big step up and it shows. This is the level where much attention is given to rehearsing the music for the Sunday services or for other events. Junior Choristers wear the medal with a green ribbon.

6. Senior Chorister - Senior Choristers are superb singers and give a strong lead in all the music we do. Senior Choristers display a high level of musicianship as well as leadership. They wear the medal with the red ribbon.

7. Head Chorister - The Head Chorister is appointed by the music director after a consultation with the rector and other music personnel. It is a leadership position of prestige and honor. The Head Chorister carries out specified duties and is a special help to the Choirmaster. In addition, the Head Chorister serves a role model to the other choristers with regard to leadership.

Choir Prayers:

GRANT TO US, O Lord, the help of thy Holy Spirit, that we may worthily sing thy praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ALMIGHTY GOD, who hast ordained that the hearts of men shall be kindled by music, and their minds thereby attuned to understand thy divine mysteries: Grant, we pray thee, that all who lead thy praises may know themselves to be thy ministers, and that the hearts of all who hear may be lifted up unto thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

A PRAYER FOR CHURCH MUSICIANS AND ARTISTS

O God, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven: Be ever present with your servants who seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by your people on earth; and grant to them even now glimpses of your beauty, and make them worthy at length to behold it unveiled for evermore; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE CHORISTERS' PRAYER

*Bless, O Lord, us thy servants who minister in thy temple;
Grant that what we sing with our lips, we may believe in our hearts,
And what we believe in our hearts we may show forth in our lives;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

MOTTO OF THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF CHURCH MUSIC (RSCM)

I will sing with the spirit and with the understanding also. ~ I Corinthians 14:15

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: How old does a boy or girl need to be to join The St. Andrew's Choristers?

A: Boys and girls can join when they are at least 8 years old or in 3rd grade. A 7-year-old can join in September if his or her eighth birthday is within the next few months. The reason for this is because choristers will need to be able to read fairly fluently from the Hymnal and Prayer Book and to be able to hold their attention for rehearsals and Sunday services.

Q: Is there an audition to be in The St. Andrew's Choristers?

A: Yes. The primary reason is for the Choirmaster to assess the potential of the boy or girl with respect to their ability to match pitches and follow simple instructions. This is also a time to ascertain if the prospective Chorister has the desire to be in the program.

Q: What happens in an audition?

A: Prospective Choristers are asked to read a few verses of psalms; to sing back notes and a few melodic patterns after they are played on the piano; and to answer a few simple questions about music. They are also asked to sing a simple song such as Happy Birthday or Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star. The best way to prepare for an audition is to get a good night's sleep and to relax.

Q: Do children have to be members of St. Andrew's Church to participate in the choir?

A: No. The choir is open to all children, regardless of their religious affiliation. The chief requirement is that the prospective Chorister and their parents commit to the schedule of rehearsals and services.

Q: What do the Choristers wear and do we need to purchase anything?

A: First, you will not need to purchase anything – everything the Choristers need to wear for the services in which they sing is provided by St. Andrew's Church. The Choristers wear vestments: All choir members wear cassocks (red) and surplices (white) are worn by choristers and adults. Choristers also wear neck ruffs as well as ribbons with colors corresponding to their rank.

Q: Will the St. Andrew's Choristers be involved in special services or concerts outside of St. Andrew's Church?

A: Yes! As the program continues to grow and there are a sufficient number of older, more experienced Choristers, we will schedule a few concerts or Services of Choral Evensong during the year.

Q: Will the St. Andrew's Choristers ever be involved in choir tours?

A: Yes, this is a definite possibility in future years after the program has had some time to grow and expand and the Choristers have a few years of singing experience.

Q: Will there be optional / make-up choir rehearsals?

A: No. They prevent choristers from being mutually accountable to one another; they prevent the group from bonding; and they prevent energetic teamwork that is required for the choir to excel.

Q: What happens to boy choristers when their voices change?

A: They will undergo formal graduation from the chorister program. Those who wish to continue singing will have the option of joining the Parish Adult Choir.

Q: What happens if you miss a lot of rehearsals?

A: Extended and chronic absences and tardiness will be reviewed by the Choirmaster followed by a discussion with the parents.

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

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