
CHORISTER HANDBOOK



BLUE WATER CHOIR SCHOOL
AT GRACE EPISCOPAL

Blue Water Choir School
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CHORISTER WELCOME

The Blue Water Choir School welcomes you and your child into our Chorister Program, and it is our hope that our choral program will give them an appreciation of music and choral singing for the rest of their lives.

Singing in a choir is one of the few things that children can do as they progress, that can match, or even exceed adult standards. Such progression can instill a sense of responsibility, dedication, and pride in doing something well that can last a lifetime.

A Chorister who is ready to learn the art of singing and music will gain self-confidence, which comes from accomplishing something in a thorough manner, and becoming successful at it.

As a wide repertoire of music is sung with limited preparation time, each Chorister learns the importance of concentration and orderliness. Research has shown that choral programs like this tend to result in participants being more organized than their peers, and schoolwork usually keeps up to standard or even improves with the orderliness. These results being to positively affect other parts of the chorister's life.

Children come to love fine music and eloquent language by virtue of the contact with the words and music they sing. The music sung includes some of the best written anthems in the past four centuries and is drawn from the musical traditions of many different countries and cultures.

It is not given to all to have a voice worthy of a solo. No chorister is compelled to sing a solo in a worship service. However, we believe that many children can become assured soloists.

Upon successful completion of the apprentice period, the Blue Water Choir School will formally admit your child as a Junior Chorister. We recognize that being a chorister is a very demanding task for a child and for the parents of that child. We are thankful for the efforts of the parents in helping their child participate in the long tradition of singing beautiful music as an offering to our community. We aim for the very highest possible standards in music. The congregation has placed the responsibility of consistently maintaining those standards with the music staff. The attached guidelines have been established for the purpose of accomplishing those standards, to ensure the smooth running of the choir, and to assure a clear understanding of responsibilities.

Please complete the attached personal information and acceptance forms and return to the Director of Music.

**Christian Schoen
Choral & Artistic Director**

BLUE WATER CHOIR SCHOOL HANDBOOK GUIDELINES

ATTENDANCE

The foundation stone of membership is absolute regularity of attendance at all regular services and practices, together with all additional events requested by the Blue Water Choir School. The detailed times are notified by the Director in the form of a choir timetable each term, which includes advance notice of term dates for the whole year.

The choir timetable is circulated at the end of each term for the following term and includes full details of choir vacation, which usually includes time after Christmas, Easter, and the summer. Parents are advised that, while we make the choir vacation schedule agree with the school vacation schedules as often as possible, there are times, especially at Christmas and Easter, when the choir needs to be present at the Blue Water Choir School during these times to perform for church services and community events.

Choristers are required to consistently participate in the following rehearsals and performance opportunities:

- Wednesday afternoon rehearsals, September through May– 5:00 PM to 6:30 PM
- Community performances throughout St. Clair County
- Choral Eucharist once a month at Grace Episcopal Church, including morning warmup, September through May - 9:00 AM to 11:30 AM
- Special Services at Christmas and Easter

Punctuality

Choristers should arrive not less than 10 minutes in advance of the advertised times. We understand that there are traffic problems, even on the weekends, but please try and anticipate these, as late arrival can cause us problems and disturb the concentration of those who are already singing.

Absence

Parents are asked to inform the Director at the start of each term of any planned vacations, along with illness or other needs for choristers to be absent from services and rehearsals.

Arriving at the Blue Water Choir School and Transportation

Responsibility for transport to and from the Blue Water Choir School, Grace Episcopal Church, and other musical venues, whether from school or from home, lies with the parents / guardians of participants. It is the parent's / guardian's responsibility to ensure their child(ren) arrive safely to the Blue Water Choir School's Choir Room at Grace Episcopal Church for rehearsals and services. The Blue Water Choir School will ensure at least one member of staff and at least one approved volunteer are on duty at least fifteen minutes before the start of rehearsals and services. If only one member of staff, or volunteer, is present when the first child arrives for rehearsal, it will be mandatory that a parent / guardian remain until such a time when other adults arrive, at least a handful of children are present, or until the rehearsal starts. Choristers will be instructed never to stay in the building on their own, but to keep in groups of two or more.

Finishing Times and Picking Up Choristers

Choristers will not be released until all the routine jobs have been carried out at the end of rehearsals and performances. Parents / guardians are asked to collect their children punctually, preferably from directly outside the Choir Room doors. If choristers are not collected from outside of the Choir Room, they will gather in Grace Episcopal Church's lobby. In the event one child is left waiting to be collected, the member of staff on duty and one of the volunteers will remain with the child in the church's office until the parents can be contacted.

If parents / guardians are delayed, a message to this effect should be left on the mobile phone of the Director - (404) 545-9764.

CHORISTER CODE

All children participating in the Chorister Program are expected to abide by the following rules:

- Support, help, and encourage all fellow choristers
- Respect and listen to the Director and other assisting adults, which includes doing what's asked, when asked
- Not being disruptive or talking during rehearsals and services
- Immediately reporting bullying to the Director, or other assisting adults
- Respect and listen to the advice and instructions of the Senior and Head Choristers
- Be kind and helpful to younger choristers
- Look after and properly taking care of their music and vestments
- Be responsible for helping keep the facilities clean

Choristers must know that the following will not be tolerated under any circumstances and could result in their removal from the Chorister Program:

- Physical and verbal bullying
- Pushing, hitting, or other aggressive behavior
- Insulting language, including swearing and name-calling
- Shouting (except in an emergency)
- Running inside the church building and church grounds

Discipline

Should any chorister's behavior warrant stern words of discipline away from the main group of children, such a meeting will take place with two adults present. The parents / guardians will be informed of the situation at the conclusion of the rehearsal or service unless such behavior warrants immediate intervention by parents / guardians.

ATTIRE

Rehearsals

Any acceptable attire may be worn during rehearsals, except for rehearsals preceding worship services or special occasions (refer to next subsection “Performances & Services”). Acceptable attire is defined as clothing that would normally be permitted at school.

Performances & Services

The Blue Water Choir School provides vestments for use in services and special occasions. On days and evenings Chorister sing in services or special occasions, the school asks the Choristers wear:

- Black Shoes
- Dark Socks
- White Shirts
- Dark Trousers or Skirts

No Jeans, workout attire, or running shoes are permitted.

TENURE

Choristers may remain in the choir until the age of 18, or high school graduation, whichever comes first (providing that behavior, health, and general progress are satisfactory). If withdrawal from the program seems important for any special reason, a Term’s notice will be given to the Chorister’s parents / guardians.

CHORISTER RANKS & ACHIEVEMENT

Apprentice Choristers

All members of the Chorister Program start as Apprentice Choristers. Like the rest of the choir, an Apprentice Chorister wears vestments for services and other events. Apprentice Choristers listen to and follow the more complex music being practiced (e.g., anthems, introits, and so forth) and learn the various routines (e.g., holding music correctly and watching the director).

When the Director thinks a child is ready for promotion (normally a year but can be shorter based on a child’s age and advancement) the Apprentice Chorister is given a short singing and music theory test. The idea is to give them a sense of achievement and to demonstrate that promotions are not automatic but have to be earned. Tests are administered when the child has demonstrated that they:

- Can cope with the full timetable of the program
- Have demonstrated an elementary knowledge of Musical Theory
- Are well-behaved
- Have made satisfactory musical progress

Promotions to Junior Chorister will happen during a regularly scheduled Choral Eucharist at Grace Episcopal Church, where choristers advancing to the next level in the choir will be formally presented with a light blue ribbon with a medallion to be worn during service.

Junior Choristers

Junior Choristers represent the first full level of chorister membership in the Chorister Program. Like the rest of the choir, Junior Choristers wear vestments and a light blue ribbon with a medallion.

On Sundays they are placed next to Senior Choristers so they can continue to advance their knowledge and experience with holding music correctly, singing, music theory, and other routines performed by the choir. Junior Choristers also start to form friendships with older singers, which is beneficial since the younger children love the extra attention and respond more quickly to instruction from young teenagers. Conversely, the old children learn to care for and empathize with younger children.

After about two years, or earlier in cases of late entry into the choir, or a chorister demonstrates exceptional ability, the Junior Chorister takes a short singing and music theory test for promotion to Chorister. As with Apprentice Choristers, tests are administered when the Director feels a chorister has demonstrated they have:

- A fundamental knowledge of Musical Theory
- Continued to show good behavior and maturity
- Made satisfactory musical progress (e.g., sight singing and music comprehension)

Promotions to Junior Chorister will happen during a regularly scheduled Choral Eucharist at Grace Episcopal Church, where choristers advancing to the next level in the choir will be formally presented with a dark blue ribbon with a medallion to be worn during service.

Chorister

Choristers attaining the level of Chorister begin to make a significant contribution to the overall choir sound. They are expected to demonstrate that they can sing confidently, maintain a good level of concentration and behavior, and begin to show leadership skills by helping younger Choristers. As with Junior Choristers, Choristers wear vestments, but are given a dark blue ribbon with medallion to wear as a replacement for their light blue ribbon and medallion.

After about two years, or earlier in cases of late entry into the choir, or a chorister demonstrates exceptional ability, the Chorister takes a short singing and music theory test for promotion to Senior Chorister. As with Choristers, tests are administered when the Director feels a chorister has demonstrated they have:

- A solid knowledge of Musical Theory
- Continued to show good behavior and maturity
- Made satisfactory musical progress (e.g., sight singing and music comprehension)
- Demonstrated leadership ability in helping younger choristers

Promotions to Junior Chorister will happen during a regularly scheduled Choral Eucharist at Grace Episcopal Church, where choristers advancing to the next level in the choir will be formally presented with a dark red ribbon with a medallion to be worn during service.

Senior Choristers

The Senior Choristers are the mainstay of the choir. They wear vestments with a dark red ribbon with medallion to wear as a replacement for their dark blue ribbon and medallion.

Senior Choristers need to acquire a degree of musical sophistication to cope with singing sections of music that are not the melody, which is generally the second soprano part. Their musical awareness continues to advance and children at this stage are expected to be able to sing in tune and hold a musical line.

The Director may ask a Senior Chorister to sing a solo, which is a valuable way of developing the voice and giving them confidence to perform in public – a confidence which manifests itself in many ways at this stage, such as in leading prayers or reading the lesson.

Head Choristers are chosen from the ranks for Senior Choristers. These posts are not automatic, and an additional test is administered as part of the process for promotion to Head Chorister. Promotions to Head Chorister will happen during a regularly scheduled church service, where choristers advancing to the next level in the choir will be formally presented with a purple ribbon with a medallion to be worn during service.

Head Choristers

Head Choristers are role models for the younger choristers in the choir, are responsible for the care and oversight of the younger choristers, and are expected to assist the Director during choir rehearsals and preparation for service.

Head Choristers are also required to:

- Achieve the highest level of vocal and music theory excellence
- Show an enthusiasm for singing and commitment to practice and services to inspire other choristers to give their best
- Convey a sense of dignity and reverence for the performances / services and the Blue Water Choir School itself
- Have a good sense of organization
- Demonstrate a general sense of leadership and team work

Head Choristers wear a purple ribbon with a medallion as a symbol of their position within the Chorister Program.

BLUE WATER CHOIR SCHOOL HANDBOOK

CHILD SAFETY

CHILD PROTECTION

Blue Water Choir School Staff

In accordance with strict policies and procedures, all current Blue Water Choir School staff members are required to successfully complete a sexual & criminal background check as part of their conditions of employment. Staff members are also required to adhere to the sexual misconduct policy (available upon request) of Grace Episcopal Church.

Parent Supervisors

Chorister parents / guardians are welcome, and encouraged, to assist with the monitoring of rehearsals and breaks, on the understanding that their presence does not prove to be a distraction. Parents wishing to assist, in this capacity, are welcome to speak with the Director.

LIVESTREAMED SERVICES

Approval must be acquired via the attached form for choristers to participate in worship services and other events that will be livestreamed by Grace Episcopal Church.

INVITATIONS / GIFTS (SAFETY PRECAUTIONS)

Choristers should not accept gifts or invitations from members of the congregation or other persons without consulting either with the Director, or their parents / guardians. The Director will notify parents / guardians as well.

HEALTH, SICKNESS, AND FIRST AID

Refer to the Addendums of this document for specific details relating to the church's policies and procedures relating to sickness and first aid. These required forms must be completed and returned to help inform the church of health problems, dietary restrictions, and medications for choristers.

CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS

While the Director has direct supervisory responsibility of the program and activities, the Rector of Grace Episcopal Church and the Blue Water Choir School Director work closely together. Parents / guardians may contact either of them at any time with questions and concerns.