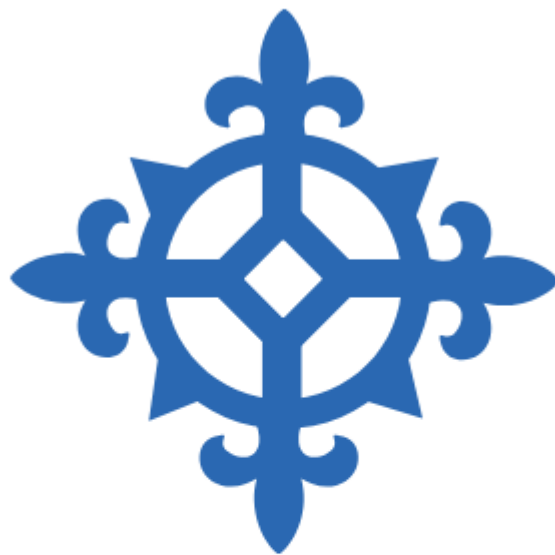


Grace Chorister Program Handbook



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Welcome to The Grace Church Chorister Program! The principle mission of the choirs here is to support worship at Grace Church through leadership in music and liturgy.

Our choir represents a tradition of musicmaking that has been at the center of the Anglican Church since the 16th century. We honor the historic role of children in leading worship through singing at a high level of excellence. Here, Choristers learn to read music quickly and to understand what they are singing. They receive a professional training in the fundamentals of music, including sight-reading, ear-training, and music theory.

Being a Chorister is about practicing responsibility and commitment as well as having fun. Choristers also develop important 21st century skills such teamwork, character, resilience and grit, and executive functioning. They tend to love working together and to develop strong friendships. Many also develop a love of service to their communities.

We are affiliated with the Royal School of Church Music in England (RSCM), and the program of instruction is comparable to places like the Washington National Cathedral. Through our rehearsals and performing, students also gain valuable spiritual development and learn about faith and Anglican tradition and liturgy.

The Grace Chorister Program takes pride in a diverse student body and is open to children and youth of all faith traditions, or none.

We're glad you're here!

Basics – What You Need To Know

Value

Many high-quality choirs charge tuition for their programs. We do not. All Grace Choristers receive a valuable musical education when they are admitted to the choir.

We do not expect children (or their families) to be Episcopalians, Christians, or indeed to have any faith at all. **They must only agree to rehearse and perform as scheduled.** Choristers are not required to take communion if they do not wish to do so, but are welcome to participate if they wish. Please note, however, that Choristers will be required to learn a few prayers from memory as they progress through the curriculum, including the Choristers' Prayer, the Lord's Prayer, the Nicene Creed, and the General Thanksgiving, as these are often sung or said together as part of the duties of the choir.

It's About Mutual Commitment

Your Chorister will get the best experience and learn the most when commitment is high and goes both ways:

1. The commitment of Grace Choristers to you:

- To provide the finest musical education
- In the context of the liturgical life of a parish
- And to provide opportunities for leadership and teamwork.

2. Your commitment to us:

- To look over and read the choir schedule, put required dates on your calendar and to be present and on time for each appearance.
- To communicate *any* absences to the Director in advance.
- To keep the Director up-to-date on all contact information: phone numbers, emails, and addresses.

Time and Attendance Commitment

During the week on Wednesdays, through the academic year:

Choristers meet for **one** rehearsal each week on Wednesday afternoons from 4:00 PM to 6:00 PM, with a weekly service of Choral Evensong during that time period. We ask that you arrive no earlier than 3:50 PM, but rehearsals will begin promptly at 4 PM, with tardiness resulting in fewer rewards.

Occasional Sundays

During the academic year, Choristers are required as part of their training to sing at Grace Church on certain scheduled Sunday mornings and evenings in addition to the weekly Wednesday rehearsal and service. You will receive a schedule for the full academic year when you enroll, so you can put the dates on your calendar. In the event of a scheduling conflict, all Choristers are asked first to attempt to resolve the conflict and to be present at choir. Families are expected to communicate any need for absence in advance. You may call Mrs. Caruso's cell phone, or email, both listed on the front cover of this handbook.

Additional events

Choristers may also experience additional performance opportunities as invitations may be extended. We will make every effort to schedule these well in advance, in order to get them on your calendars with no conflicts.

Teamwork Is Being There – A Direct Note to Choristers

Our choir is a team: your teammates depend on you. When you are gone, it affects more people than just you. It is important not to let your teammates down. On other teams you don't always get to play all the time, and you sit on the bench while others play. **In choir, you never sit on the side.** Your contribution is important all the time. Plus, it's more fun when you're here!

As the choir's numbers are limited to no more than 20 choristers at present, we expect that every child admitted to the choir to remain committed and consistent. Children who do not maintain good attendance at rehearsals and performances, or have behavior issues that affect the whole choir, could be asked to leave.

Safe Church Policies

All Choir events operate under the Safe Church guidelines of the Episcopal Church. The music staff takes these rules seriously, both at the Church and elsewhere if we are able to travel. Two adults are always on duty to supervise children, and no Chorister may be alone with one adult. Staff are not allowed to give rides to choristers, but we can work to help find carpools.

Opportunities For Families and Supporters

During rehearsal, parents and guardians are welcome to wait on the first floor of the Parish Hall where there is a comfortable parlor, with coffee and tea available. It is our hope you will also attend as many of the weekly Evensong services as possible, because Choristers seem to blossom when family members attend services and concerts at which they sing. It's meaningful to your Chorister when they know you think this is important.

Family members may also wish to volunteer their help in the Program as it continues to grow. Ways you can help:

- Help provide transportation if/when the choir travels.
- Provide occasional snacks for Wednesday afternoons if you have extra cookies, granola bars or fruit on hand.
- Offer any administrative skills you may have, especially in communications.
- Help with vestment care – washing, fitting, organizing.

Sign-In/Out

Every time you arrive at Grace Church for practices, Choristers should report directly to the choir room on the third floor to sign in. The Music Director or Head Chorister will be taking attendance. Every time a Chorister leaves, they must sign out with the leader keeping attendance. This insures that we know who is in the building, for their safety. If they fail to sign out we will call you to make sure they are OK.

Social Development and Travel

Throughout the year, we may schedule voluntary, fun social gatherings such as bowling or skating, to provide Choristers with additional opportunities for developing lasting friendships within the group, as well as empowering them for service to others in the community. It is our belief that a close-knit choir community is an important tool in the fight against negative influences on children's lives.

Choir Travel

- The Choristers may make occasional trips to sing elsewhere in New Jersey and surrounding states, as arranged and scheduled. Collaboration with other choirs offers more opportunity to expand skills and absorb new ideas, and we will look for ways to work with others.
- The Choristers may also sing for local nursing homes on occasion.
- As we expand our numbers and skills, we will look for opportunities to tour farther, offering chances to travel, perhaps even overseas someday!

Summer Music Camps

Choristers who have been in the program one year or more are eligible to apply for one of the many national RSCM camps held each summer. These camps are held all over the country, and enable children to perform top-quality music under a noted conductor, while enjoying the company of other children in similar choirs.

The Diocese of New Jersey also offers a summer camp held in Cape May every year during July – this camp is modelled on the RSCM camps, and is often a great first camp experience.

What Do I Need To Know About Rehearsals and Services? For Choristers:

Early Is On Time – being prepared:

When you arrive in the choir room (5-10 minutes before) for a rehearsal or service, check the “white board” on the wall of the choir room. Music to be rehearsed and sung appears there. Retrieve your folder and organize yourself for rehearsal. Make sure you have a pencil and use the restroom before the rehearsal or service.

Leaving a service once it has begun is not permitted except for extenuating circumstances.

Cell Phone policy: Turn your mobile phone to “off” or “vibrate” during rehearsals and worship services. The use of cell phones or other electronic devices is not allowed during services or rehearsals.

One discreet water bottle (with a lid) is ok. DO NOT bring cups without sealed lids or food items into the church or rehearsal room. Bring ONLY bring water into the church. We do have a water cooler on the third floor that you can refill from.

Folders/Slots/Music: You will have an assigned folder and slot to store it in. You are encouraged to note musically helpful markings in your music. These marks should be in pencil only- No pens or highlighters.

Choristers are to be responsible stewards of their own music and folders, and are expected to keep music in good condition, and their vestments and folders neat.

RSCM Badges and Skill Workbooks – Incentives and Rewards

Chorister Standards – Incentives and Keeping Track

Children enjoy incentives that help them keep track of progress. We use an easy system of Standards (check marks) that not only track attendance, but can add up to rewards later on by encouraging good work. Up to four Standards may be earned at every rehearsal, service, or concert as outlined below. Rehearsals immediately preceding services are considered part of the service.

- 1 Standard will be awarded if you are *on time*.
- 1 Standard awarded if you have a *pencil* in your hand for rehearsal
- 1 Standard awarded for active and attentive *participation*
- 1 Standard awarded on occasion for exceptional work, or a hard-won achievement, or even just a great attitude on a tough day.

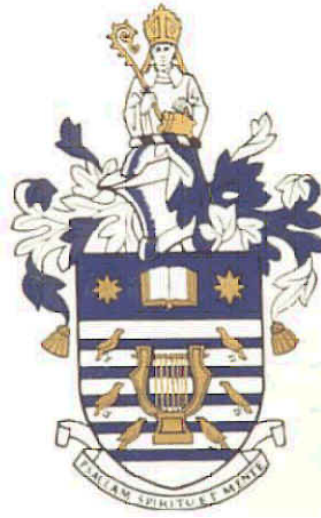
As in other disciplines, such as scouting, Choristers take pleasure in earning ribbons and medals in specific colors that signify levels of achievement, to be worn with their vestments. These incentives are tracked in workbooks that are completed during rehearsals and help reinforce and explain these levels of achievement. Choristers will receive a handout when they join that enumerate these levels and what it takes to earn them.

Rewards

Because Choristers do work hard, they will also receive a \$10 gift card to Barnes and Noble for every 30 Standards earned.

Music Fund

Each choir season, instrumentalists may be hired to accompany special music offerings at Grace Church, in addition to covering gift cards, snacks, costs of music, supplies, vestments and any travel. Please consider contributing to the Music Fund to defray the costs of running the Chorister Program, which are borne by Grace Church on behalf of Choristers.



An RSCM – Affiliated Choir
www.rscmamerica.org

DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

Diane D. Caruso, Director of Music

Email: music@gracehaddon.org

Phone: 267-250-3096(cell)

Days off from Grace Church: Monday and Saturday

If you or your child are unable to attend a scheduled event, please notify Mrs. Caruso directly via email, written note, or phone as soon as possible.

Please never hesitate to contact us with questions, concerns, or joys.