

CHRIST CHURCH  
CATHEDRAL  
CHOIR

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HANDBOOK  
FOR  
THE CATHEDRAL CHOIR  
OF  
CHRIST CHURCH  
CATHEDRAL  
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

2007-2008

The primary mission of the *Cathedral Choir* is to facilitate the worship of Almighty God through musical leadership, stewardship of time and talent, and musical community outreach.

The *Cathedral Choir* is an ensemble of children's and adult voices (SATB) that sings weekly during the choir season (September to June), and offers special musical programs throughout the year. The choir sings a challenging repertoire from early plainsong to the work of contemporary compositions.

Mr. Kevin Jones, our Director of Music, earned the Bachelor of Arts from Ashland College, and the Master of Music degree in Organ Performance and Master of Music degree in Collaborative Piano, both from the Cleveland Institute of Music. Prior to receiving his BA from Ashland College, he attended Southern Methodist University where he studied organ with Robert Anderson. In addition to being a master organist and conductor, he is a skilled vocalist and teacher of singing.

We are truly blessed with talent, resources, and the love of God, music and each other. In deference to those blessings we are committed to maintaining a standard of excellence as we undertake this ministry. The following handbook has been developed to offer information, answer questions, clarify expectations and give support to those who join us. Please remember and memorize the Chorister's Prayer, now so beloved by so many:

*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 that what we believe in our hearts  
we may show forth in our lives.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## JOINING THE CHOIR:

The first step in joining the choir is to schedule a meeting with Mr. Jones. He will talk to you about the choir, the expectations for membership and will have you sing for him. He will be interested in establishing the section in which you should sing, your ability to read music and in becoming familiar with your voice. People come to the choir with varying levels of expertise, from professional musicians to beginners. There are basic expectations that a singer has the ability to match pitch and will do what is necessary to learn the music assigned. Participation is open to anyone, but is in consultation with the Director of Music. During the course of a singer's tenure with the choir, the director may make specific suggestions regarding individual's musical development. These are meant to be supportive of the individual as well as the group, not individually critical in any way.

## GETTING STARTED:

Your first experience of the choir will be at a rehearsal on Wednesday evening. (for Choristers, 5 p.m., for Adults and Teens, 6:30 p.m.). Prior to that time you will be given a music folder. A cassock and cotta will be given to you to wear during the services. Following are some expectations and hints to help you get off to a good start.

## ATTENDANCE:

It is expected that choir members will attend all rehearsals, services and performances throughout the year. As a former choir member was fond of saying, "Choir is a team sport!" When you are absent you are missed. Of course, life's challenges will make perfect attendance difficult. If you know you are going to be absent, please indicate this by signing out on the calendar on the wall of the Choir Room. If an illness or unexpected conflict arises, be sure to call the music office at 860-527-7231, x112, or email Mr. Jones at [kjones@cccathedral.org](mailto:kjones@cccathedral.org). **This is very important.** Absences may require rebalancing sections or making changes in what we are singing. Most importantly, we worry about you if we haven't heard how you are doing.

More thoughts on attendance: If you are tired or have had "a rough week" please consider coming on Wednesday anyway. Singing great music may be just the refreshment you need. If you have laryngitis or are otherwise vocally indisposed, but otherwise in good health come and

follow along as the rest of your colleagues rehearse. Of course, if you are ill, stay home, rest and heal, and don't infect the rest of us!

**Also, please be on time.** Plan to arrive at rehearsal 10-15 minutes before we begin in order to gather your music and get settled. Walking in after a rehearsal has begun is very disruptive and is disrespectful of your fellow choristers.

On a chalkboard at the beginning of each rehearsal will be listed a rehearsal order. You will see a series of numbers written. Please put your music in this order for rehearsal. The numbers you will see written on the board will be FILE NUMBERS (A2, K40, etc. . .) Each copy of each piece in the Cathedral Library has a FILE NUMBER stamped on the cover. In addition, there is a penciled number that corresponds to your FOLDER NUMBER. It is a matter of good stewardship that the Cathedral Library remains intact for those who come after us. Therefore, all music will be collected after we finish with it and placed in boxes for safe-keeping.

Remember. . . your particular copy of music is not yours to keep, or write your name on, or write notes to your neighbor. It is part of our heritage. Think of it as a library book. So if you wouldn't write in a library book, don't write in your music other than musical notations, breathing, diction matters, etc. . .

#### DEPARTMENT:

We have a lot of music to learn in very little time. Please refrain from talking to your neighbor during rehearsals, from humming or making noise when other sections are working on a passage, and from tapping your foot on the floor. Do count, but tap on your own body lightly, or tap your foot INSIDE YOUR SHOE.

During the liturgies we are highly visible. The congregation depends on us to cue them when to stand, and basically what to do. Please participate fully. Please be careful about talking, moving about, rolling your eyes during the sermon, blowing your nose conspicuously or loudly, leaving the choir loft unless in an emergency or any other activity that draws attention to the choir (other than singing, of course).

And, as always, WATCH the director. Hold your music so that you can see him at all times. Things can change very quickly, so eyes up!

Dress: Choir members should dress as they would for church. For comfort some members do remove clothing under their vestments. Please do not wear turtlenecks, bright colored pants, socks or shoes, or other clothing that "sticks out" of the choir robes. Top buttons should be closed. Men should wear dark pants, dark socks and dark shoes, unless comfort or injury requires otherwise. Women should wear dark or black closed toe shoes. Under no circumstances are athletic shoes permissible, unless a medical necessity.

Jewelry is fine, as long as it is small.

*Please do not wear perfume, cologne or aftershave. These may cause allergic reactions in your fellow singers.*

#### SECTION LEADERS:

The Cathedral Choir has seven section leaders. These are professional musicians who are able to assist the members of their section through demonstration, teaching, redirection and support. The section leaders are responsible for the solos and small ensemble portions of the repertoire. Feel free to ask a section leader to help you if you are having difficulty with a portion of the music.

#### MUSIC:

You will be given a folder in which to keep your music. Keeping track of all this music is a huge job. You can help by placing music we are no longer singing in the "return music" box in the choir room. Always feel free to take music home to work on between rehearsals (but don't forget to bring it back!) You will be given a pencil to mark changes or special emphases in the music. Use it liberally. Please do not mark on music in ink, and please do not write your name on your music unless you are sure that you are immortal and will be singing in the choir for all eternity. (Think graffiti. . .)

#### CHOIR VESTMENTS:

The Cathedral Choir wears purple cassocks and white cottas. The sleeves should reach your wrists and the hems your ankles. Admittedly, all of our vestments do not fit perfectly. Please let the Choir Verger know if you are having trouble finding vestments that fit reasonably

well. Both pieces of the choir robes wash easily, and should be taken home from time to time during the year to be washed.

When we sing services that do not include the Eucharist (such as Lessons and Carols or Evensong) choir members who have academic hoods may wear these with their vestments. These add a festive air to the liturgy. If you have earned an advanced degree and would like to purchase a hood to reflect your discipline and university, we have information where they can be obtained. This is entirely optional.

#### SPECIAL SERVICES AND EVENTS:

This year the Choir will be singing a total of six Evensongs. Three of these will occur on Wednesday evenings and will be sung by the Choristers only. The others are on Sunday afternoons as indicated on the yearly schedule. We will also sing two concerts this year, one on Christmas Eve, and the other after our May Evensong. Please look ahead and plan your schedule accordingly.

We may also sing from time to time at Cathedral weddings and funerals, special liturgical events such as Diocesan celebrations and the like.

#### TRAVEL:

From time to time the choir is invited to sing at other churches, in other cities and countries. We are fortunate to receive financial support from the Dean and Chapter, but choir members may be expected to cover a portion of the cost. We will plan fund raisers and make every attempt to assure that all can participate without hardship.

#### SOCIAL GATHERINGS:

The choir enjoys a number of formal and informal opportunities to socialize. From informal gathering after rehearsal to holiday parties and pitch-ins, we find many ways to increase our friendship and positive energy. There are two appointed Social Chairpersons that will help to coordinate these events. They will ask for your assistance, please give it when asked.

#### SPIRITUAL GROWTH:

In addition to musical training, the choir offers members opportunity for spiritual growth through regular participation in the liturgy, familiarization with sacred music and church history, and support of one another. In any given year members may include persons from other faith traditions. All are welcome and encouraged to participate in whatever ways are meaningful.

#### SUNDAY MORNINGS:

On Sunday mornings we gather to rehearse in the Choir Room. Choir should be vested in cassocks only. We should be in our seats and ready to rehearse at 9:15 a.m. (so arrive in time to vest and gather your music). We rehearse the music for the day, then don our cottas and gather in the hallway for a prayer and a blessing. Please do this quietly so as not to disrupt the prayer and meditation of the congregants.

The Procession will be made following the Cross and Torches. Singers process two by two leaving two pew spaces between each pair. The pairs approach the altar, reverence with a slight bow, and then separate and move to their respective choir chairs. If there are two crosses, please reverence this processional cross as it passes you.

The choir receives communion first during the service. Once all choir members have returned to their seats we stand to sing the communion motet. Remaining communion hymns are sung sitting down.

The general rule for congregational hymns is that first and last verses are sung in unison and interior verses sung in parts. If we are processing in or out, we sing in unison. Communion hymns may be sung in parts.

As with all things, these are guidelines and may be changed at the discretion of the Director of Music.