

BUCKINGHAM CHURCH CHOIR
A GOOD PRACTICE GUIDE FOR CHORISTERS

Version 9 (7.1.20)

Aims:

- To worship God through our choral ministry, serving needs with grace and reverence.
- To maintain a vigilant pastoral role to each member of the choir.
- To provide musical education and enjoyment.
- To provide a friendly social environment for choir members.
- To strive for high standards so as to effectively lead, support and develop worship.
- To increase choir numbers in all sections.
- To develop a high choral profile
- To maintain a varied repertoire for services and participation in community events.
- To continue the choral tradition at St. Peter & St. Paul's.

1. Under Church Policy:

- 1.1.** Care for the welfare of young people (under 16) during, and immediately before and after rehearsals and services. Immediately disclose to the Safeguarding Officer and/or Pastoral Team, as appropriate, any concerns regarding the welfare and safety of children and vulnerable adults. This involves reporting a concern, including any apparent inappropriate conduct by adults, and vulnerable adults, affecting young people. The children's officer, or if not practical, another responsible adult, should be present during, and immediately before and after rehearsals and services, as well as the leader. Further, no young person should be left alone with another individual - follow the 'Triad' rule as far as possible, practical and reasonable.
- 1.2.** Comply with (i) all reasonable and lawful instructions given by the Rector and the PCC; and (ii) any rules, policies and procedures notified by the Minister, Organist and Choirmaster, and the PCC from time to time;
- 1.3.** Co-operate with any criminal record and DBS checks that the PCC reasonably requires from time to time in order to comply with safeguarding requirements and good safeguarding practice;
- 1.4.** Undertake safeguarding training at periodic intervals, if a choir member is reasonably required by the PCC;

- 1.5. At all times fully comply with the security and Health and Safety arrangements in relation to the Church and the safety of choristers (under 16) as above.
- 1.6. Not admit any person to or dismiss any person from the Choir, without prior approval of the Choirmaster & Organist / Minister, as appropriate.
- 1.7. The Choir shall be affiliated to the Royal Schools of Church Music

2. Choristers Obligations

2.1. Any person wishing to become a chorister shall apply for an audition which will be held by the Organist and Choirmaster. If successful, the candidate will be offered a probationary position. Acceptance of such membership shall imply agreement to these Rules.

2.2. In exceptional circumstances, Choristers may be asked to reconsider their position and/or re-audition. This will always be a helpful, supportive process. Following re-audition/discussion a Chorister shall be given support and guidance on areas for improvement and if appropriate, a reasonable period in which to improve. If the Organist and Choirmaster finds that the Chorister's performance is still unsatisfactory the Organist and Choirmaster may then recommend to the Rector that we ask the Chorister to stand down. In all circumstances, the Chorister's membership shall be reviewed following discussion with the member (Chorister) and with sensitivity at all times. The termination date should be agreed.

2.3. Each Chorister shall be responsible for seeking to develop and improve standards of his/her technique, for example, correct posture through the RSCM Voice for Life Scheme. The choir will encourage members to attend courses and will give financial support where possible for junior choristers (U18) to attend.

2.4. Unless another arrangement has been agreed (e.g. for holiday, unavoidable commitment etc.), Choristers shall make every effort to attend all rehearsals and services and arrive at rehearsals punctually, allowing time to have books ready.

2.5. Choristers must look after their music and bring a pencil to rehearsals.

2.6. If Choristers are unable to commit to singing in a service, they should notify the Organist and Choirmaster, giving reasonable advance notice.

2.7. Choristers/members should always notify the Choirmaster of any planned absence and give reasonable notice except in exceptional circumstances. In the case of unexplained absence, the Choirmaster will make every effort to check on the welfare of the individual(s).

2.8. Choristers shall ensure that they are competent to sing their own part at each service. In exceptional circumstances, a Chorister may be refused permission by the Organist and

Choirmaster to sing at a particular service/concert, for example, if the member has had insufficient rehearsal with the choir.

2.9. Members will be issued music free of charge. Choristers shall not retain choir copies indefinitely, but return them to the choir library promptly. All choristers have a responsibility to keep the library tidy, particularly when putting copies and folders away. If a Chorister wishes to have their own copy at home beyond the practice period, they must buy their own copy. Choristers must also meet the cost of any damaged music beyond reasonable wear and tear, including hired copies of music where applicable, and any charges for exceeding the loan period(s). For hired music, copies shall be returned to the Librarian in the same state as they were acquired, and with pencil markings erased.

2.10. Choristers shall not bring the choir and church into disrepute. They shall use their best endeavours to publicise the choir positively.

2.11. Choristers shall provide the Organist and Choirmaster with contact details and keep him/her informed of any changes to these details. By becoming a Chorister an individual does not automatically consent to the circulation of his/her details to other Choristers in printed or electronic format.

2.12. Choristers undertake not to distribute contact details of any choir member without their permission.

2.13. The highest standards of conduct must be maintained in all pastoral, counselling, educational, musical, worship and recreational circumstances. It is unacceptable for any person(s) to engage in behaviour or any action which might allow an inappropriate relationship to develop with a child or young person, or might expose them to unsuitable influences.

3. Termination of Membership

3.1. Choristers shall give the Organist & Choirmaster reasonable notice (at least one month) to terminate their membership, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Membership shall also be deemed to have lapsed if a Chorister does not attend the first four rehearsals of the Season, or misses four consecutive Thursday rehearsals, and/or no contact is made with the Organist & Choirmaster to advise of the reason for the absence. If no arrangement is made, membership is to lapse.

3.2. A Chorister may be asked to leave the Choir in the circumstances set out in Rule [2.2] above.

3.3. If a Chorister needs to be absent for a set period, such as an extended holiday or rehearsals for a community event, the Chorister should notify the Organist & Choirmaster so that an arrangement may be made, agreed, and made transparent to the choir membership.

3.4. University/College students may join the choir for a limited period during their vacations, for example, study leave, Christmas and Easter.

3.5. Ad hoc, occasional appearances, or 'cherry picking', is unhelpful to the choir. Without regular attendance and commitment, membership will lapse. This includes, for example, attending another choir at the same time(s).

3.6. The Rector may terminate a Chorister's membership without notice if he/she commits an act of gross misconduct.

4. Rehearsal and Services

4.1. Rehearsals begin and/or end with choir prayer(s).

4.2. The choir shall normally rehearse weekly on Thursdays in school term time (7:10pm – 8:15pm) and on Sundays (10:25am – 10:45am) and before Benefice Services (5:25pm – 5:45pm), allowing reasonable flexibility for unavoidable individual commitments. This does not include going to sing in another choir. If extenuating circumstances occur, the Organist and Choirmaster, or a nominated person, will contact all members by telephone/email to provide an update.

4.3. Each member of the choir shall conduct him/herself in keeping with the expected musical and collegiate standards of Buckingham Church Choir, as stated by the Organist and Choirmaster and in accordance with these guidelines. This includes recognising being part of a team and 'not performing as a separate entity' (RSCM, Voice for Life Chorister's Companion, 2009); being reliable, cooperative and committed; being aware of the needs of the other members of the choir; being respectful of the musical requirements for leading worship; and giving warmth and conviviality to all.

4.4. Unless an active, regular member, Buckingham Church Choir reserves the right to refuse admission to attend choir at practices, rehearsals, and/or during services".

4.5. Choristers shall wear the choir's robe at Buckingham Parish Church Services, Benefice Services and at other singing events involving the choir's title, unless there are circumstances such as disability, medical etc. which prevent a Chorister from carrying out their normal robed duties. Surplices shall be worn (excluding probationers, rehearsals and on Good Friday). Processions shall be conducted in an orderly fashion.

4.6. Each member of the choir is responsible for the prompt return of music books and other sheet music after each service; unless needed for another service forthcoming, music shall be returned to the choir library. This helpfully reduces administration time. Similarly, copies should not be left at home for disproportionate periods of time.

4.7. Choristers are requested not to chatter during rehearsals and during the organ voluntaries immediately before and after services.

4.8. Choristers are requested to be mindful of anything which might pose a health and safety risk or compromise a respectful and professional appearance. Examples include: hair, paper, and garments near candles; trip hazards in the choir stalls and Tower Room, including clutter, large bags, cups and bottles, books left out etc.

4.9. Choristers are asked not to be under the influence of drink or drugs at a rehearsal/service. Any member thought to be intoxicated will not be permitted to participate.

4.10. Choristers who are required to take regular preventative medication and/or have a medical condition (E.g. epilepsy, anaphylactic, asthma or diabetes) **MUST** inform the Organist and Choirmaster, carry medication, and ensure their medication is up to date and taken as necessary prior to the rehearsal/service. Anyone on medication is expected to take sufficient care of their own welfare. The use of Aerosols is not permitted.

4.11. If a Chorister wishes to make a complaint, it may be best to wait for a while, take advice if necessary, consider the pros and cons, then try resolve *informally* before taking the matter to the Organist and Choirmaster, or the Rector. Any concern or grievance, must follow church policy and procedures.

5. Equality

5.1. The choir shall be committed to equality in all its functioning, both internal and external. It will actively seek to act and campaign against discrimination on the grounds of sex, sexual orientation or gender identity, age, race, nationality, ethnic heritage or cultural origin, disability, religion or belief or any other aspect of identity which can lead to discrimination. It will actively seek membership from members of oppressed groups. Although members are not required to be baptised or confirmed, they are required to be supportive and sympathetic to the aims and values of the Christian church and to be prepared to be ambassadors for it.

6. Public engagement and fees

6.1 Junior Choristers (U18) are paid £1.00 for rehearsals and £1.00 for services.

6.2. The wedding and funeral fee for Choristers is £10 flat rate, or waived as agreed.

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