

ST.MARY'S WIMBLEDON CHOIR ('SMC'):
INFORMATION FOR NEW SINGERS

We are a friendly group of people, whose singing is primarily an expression of our faith, and who love to sing great music together. At present we number 22 adults, another 14 occasional singers, and 13 choristers. Our activities are centred on the weekly choir practice, which we attend even if not singing the following Sunday. We are in the habit of rehearsing music for 3 or more of the coming Sundays, as well as new repertoire for major events a long way off! Our location in the services is sometimes in the chancel, sometimes on the west gallery.

Membership

There are degrees of membership to reflect most situations, summarised as follows:

- Singing regularly at all services and festivals
- Singing regularly at all 9.30 Eucharists, or all 6.30 Evensongs, but not both
- Singing only at major events needing augmented choir eg Choral Evensongs, Advent and Christmas Carol Services, Midnight Eucharist, Cathedral visits, Concerts (this is open to good sight-readers only)

New members are asked to attend as many as four Friday practices before joining in on a Sunday, simply to learn repertoire (maybe sooner for good sight-readers!) This is also sufficient time for you to see if you like us, and to see if your voice will blend.

Attendance, SMCRegister

Whatever your agreed level of commitment, it is requested that you let the MD know your pattern of attendance a term in advance (or at least half a term), as the music list is chosen on the basis of this. To facilitate this, please use the choir register, which is circulated by email and on the church website (<http://choirregister.stmaryswimbledon.org> - password available from leaders named below) some time before the start of each term. A hard copy is kept on the vestry notice-board, updated regularly. Please use it to notify any change, or email the MD. If you miss a Friday, it would not be wise to sign up for the following Sunday. (In the case of low numbers on your part, the MD may nevertheless contact you to sing).

Practice times

Fridays: 8.00 – 9.30 full practice (on alternate weeks the sopranos start at 7.30 to rehearse with the choristers) – in church during summer, usually in vestry during colder months. This main part of the rehearsal will conclude with a prayer.

9.30 -9.45: monthly pattern of part-rehearsals, usually thus:

- 1st, 2nd and 3rd Friday: part rehearsal (more vocal training than note-bashing! Sometimes two or more parts at a time as need arises and space permits, sometimes starting at 9.15)
- This pattern will be over-ridden on Fridays immediately before Choral Evensongs and services with heavier musical content, for which more time will be given to the full practice.
- 9.45 drinks at the local!

Sundays: 8.45 for 9.30 Eucharist
 5.45 for 6.30 Sung Evensong
 5.00 for 6.30 Choral Evensong

Extra rehearsals may be arranged for major events by prior consultation with the whole choir.

On arrival

Always enter via the vestry (even when main church doors open) and pick up your own music. It is advisable to make this 5 minutes before the beginning of the rehearsal. Please use this time to look up the hymns etc. Most practices will begin with vocal warm-ups – miss these at your peril, as in any gym work-out!!.

If you arrive late

We are all unavoidably delayed at times, and a workable understanding is in place if you miss most or all of a pre-service rehearsal: let the conductor know you are there, to which the acknowledgement will be 'Thank you'. The protocol to follow is then to sit in the congregation and 'join in the worship congregationally', offering invaluable feedback at the end of the service. However, if your part is dangerously thin on the ground, the conductor may approach you to either join in the whole service, or to sing only in the anthem/motet. Explanations/apologies may be left to an appropriate time eg the end of the service.

Robing

For all services we wear a red cassock (and for the rehearsal immediately before each service), which will be supplied.

Non-musical aspects of worship and liturgy

As a part of Christ's Body that is there primarily to worship and to facilitate the worship in the congregation, an essential part of our function is to take a lead in prayers, responses, and when to sit/kneel/stand. So where possible, we stand up together as the organ starts each hymn introduction; we face the altar during the creed; we pace the said parts of the service in unison with the clergy etc. When leading from the chancel position, we also make a point of turning to face the congregation during the hymns, Gloria, Sanctus etc.

Books and music

You will be given a number for most books and music, as far as stocks will allow. This means that your own copy may be taken home for practice, but only if you will be attending the next practice/service. **Please notify the Choir Librarian when you do this.** A certain amount of sharing will be necessary in a choir that allows flexibility in numbers!

Music Lists

These are posted on the church's website, but will also be put on the choir notice board, at least 4 weeks in advance.

Weddings, funerals, memorial services

The SMC sings at around half of the weddings at St.Mary's, half of which are hymns-only. A list of choir weddings is published on the notice board for those able and willing to volunteer (small remuneration based on the numbers available, with any surplus going to the choir fund). To ensure a strong choir, 4 professional/semi-professional singers will be booked IN ADDITION for weddings with anthems. Similar arrangements apply to memorial services and funerals.

Youth Choir, Family Worship Band

Did you know that we also have a Youth Choir, occasional Family Worship Band and a Guitar Group? They lead the worship at the 11.15 Informal Service. Activities for other members of your family?

Contact

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AD MAIOREM DEI GLORIAM

Chris Thomas (Director of Music)
Ben Revill (Deputy Director of Music)
Andrew Lenon (Assistant Organist)
Iris Ronayne (Chorister Assistant)
Sarah Colley (Choir Librarian)
The Rev'd Mary Bide (Rector)