

St. John Baptist Church



Choir Handbook

St John the Baptist, Frenchay

Choir Handbook

WELCOME

Welcome to the choir of St John the Baptist, Frenchay. We are delighted to welcome you, and will try to do everything possible to ensure that you have a happy and successful time with us. This handbook is designed to answer some of the questions you may have, provide an insight into how the choir operates and the standards we aim to achieve, our expectations of you, and your commitment to the choir.

Becoming a member of Frenchay choir brings exciting opportunities and responsibilities. I hope together we can enjoy success, fun, friendship and fulfilment in the future.

Best wishes,

Andrew Morgan
Music Director

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1. Background

The choir of St John the Baptist, Frenchay was formed in the 1890s when an organ was first installed in the church. It was affiliated to the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) on 16 May 1974, and has established an excellent reputation for its standards of choral singing.

The choir's 25+ members enjoy tackling an exciting and ambitious repertoire, with weekly Sunday morning and evening services, including major choral services each month, and occasional concerts and other events.

2. Rehearsals

Rehearsals are held at the church on alternate Fridays from 7:30pm – 9:00pm. There is normally a short break during each rehearsal when notices are given out.

Additional rehearsals take place immediately before each service, normally from 10:30am-10:40am for the 10:45am morning service, and from 4:45pm-5:30pm for the monthly chorally-focused evening service which starts at 6pm.

3. Services & Events

The choir's primary role is to enable members of the church congregation to worship through music. It achieves this through providing the music for the 2 main services each Sunday. Once per month there is a chorally-based evening service (usually Choral Evensong, but also Taize etc.).

In addition, the choir sings for a small number of special services and events each year, including a Good Friday event and Christmas carol services. The choir may also occasionally be asked to sing for weddings and funerals.

4. Attendance

It is important that members are always in their places by 7:25pm so that rehearsals may start promptly at 7:30pm.

Members are expected to attend as many rehearsals as possible, with a minimum of 75% of Friday rehearsals attended. Members are expected to attend on average 4 Sunday services per month (e.g. 3 morning and 1 evening services) with a minimum of 3 Sunday services per month attended. If you have any difficulties, please discuss these with the Music Director.

The additional rehearsals immediately preceding a service are extremely important, as this is when any special aspects are finalised, and for major choral services there is an opportunity to rehearse with the organ. It is important that members are in their places with robes and music 5 minutes before the start of the rehearsal to ensure that time is not lost in finding a space in the vestry or stalls.

If for any reason you are unable to attend a rehearsal or service, or know of any member who is unable to attend, please "sign out" in advance on the "signing-out" sheet on the vestry noticeboard. One member's unanticipated absence can upset the balance of a rehearsal or the success of a service. Don't underestimate the importance of your individual contribution to the choir. Should any short-notice emergencies arise, please contact the Music Director by phone.

5. Music

You will be issued with music for each rehearsal/service unless you already own the appropriate copies, which may be used provided they are the correct edition. The Music Librarian will make every effort to obtain sufficient copies.

It is the responsibility of each member to ensure that music is returned immediately following the service in which it is used. Delays in returning music, or loss of music, will result in the church incurring the costs of replacement.

Photocopied music must only be used in accordance with the provisions of the Church Copyright Licence.

6. Dress for services

You will be issued with a robe to wear during services which will be numbered or named. It is your responsibility to care for it appropriately. Collars, cuffs, ties and surplices should be washed at least twice a year in preparation for Christmas and Easter.

You may wear clothes of your own choice underneath the robes providing that they cannot be seen. Where clothing protrudes from underneath the robes the following principles apply:

Ladies:

Dark (preferably black) skirt or trousers, and dark (preferably black) shoes, not trainers. A long-sleeved white top is an acceptable alternative to wearing cuffs.

Men:

Collared shirt, preferably with a tie, and dark (preferably black) shoes, no trainers.

Jewellery should be discreet, and long hair should be tied back. Academic hoods may be worn with the robes on festal occasions (e.g. Christmas Carol services), but should never be worn during Eucharist services.

RSCM ribbons/awards may be worn by Juniors where the appropriate tests have been passed. Ribbons will be relinquished on graduation to being an adult choir member.

An alternative dress code may be used where it best fits the occasion (e.g. for Taize services).

7. Membership

Membership is open to all. There are no auditions (though voices may be heard by the Music Director to ensure a proper balance is maintained), and no preconditions or requirements for membership, other than enthusiasm, dedication and a willingness to learn and attend rehearsals regularly. Some degree of musicality is preferred (i.e. being able to sing in tune), but the ability to read music or to sing from sight is not mandatory.

New members are always welcome throughout the year, though there is greater advantage in joining in September, January or May as this allows time to prepare for the more demanding Christmas, Easter and summer concert periods. Potential new members are invited to come and sing with the choir for one or two months before making a firm commitment.

If the Music Director feels that the balance of the choir would be adversely affected, or there is some other musical reason to do so, he may recommend that a potential new member explore other avenues in developing their singing voice before considering joining the choir.

8. Membership fees / fundraising

There is no membership fee. The church will provide access to music and robes without charge.

In order to maintain sufficient income to develop the music programme, the treasurers work hard to establish and develop sources of external income as well as demonstrating, with the help of members, that the choir is willing and able to generate funds through self-help. This may include a range of fundraising activities during the course of the year.

Sponsorship, grants and other financial support are always required. Many companies support their staff's activities and will contribute to funds. Do try to find out if your employer has such funding – your personal approach is likely to be the most successful.

In addition to seeking funding from outside organisations, the choir arranges events throughout the year by way of social activities and fundraising. If you have ideas for social or fundraising events, please advise the Music Director.

9. Expectations of choir members

We want the choir to be enjoyable, successful, friendly and fulfilling. In order to achieve this we ask for a commitment from you to take responsibility for the choir by:

- Being on time to all rehearsals and services prepared to give your best
- Bringing your music to rehearsals - keeping your music in order and having a pencil with you
- Knowing your music
- Being conscious of good posture at all times
- Keeping your eyes on the Music Director during rehearsals
- Listening to directions and the pitch the first time they are given - talking while the Music Director is rehearsing or giving instructions is never appropriate
- Not talking to other choir members whilst in the choir stalls during services
- Respecting the church and choir's environment, property and facilities – this includes keeping the choir vestry clean and tidy
- Taking care of your own and others property
- Treating all members, staff and visitors with courtesy and respect
- Keeping noise to a reasonable level and using acceptable and appropriate language
- Ensuring no hazardous or illegal substances or articles are brought into the choir environment
- Not having any foreign objects in your mouth at any time during rehearsals or services (e.g. gum)
- Not smoking anywhere within the church building or church grounds
- Keeping mobile phones switched off completely during rehearsals and services - it will be assumed that the owner of any mobile phone which rings during rehearsals or services has volunteered to provide the next pre-service refreshments
- Ensuring the health and safety of self and others and reporting any dangers, hazards and accidents
- Asking for help if you or those around you are struggling with a part
- Notifying the Music Administrator of any change of address or other contact details

10. Parking

Parking space is limited at the church on Sundays, and all members are encouraged to park outside the church grounds to allow the spaces near the door to be used by disabled churchgoers. For Friday rehearsals, there will usually be space in the church grounds.

Please note that on the first Sunday evening of each month your car is liable to become trapped in the church grounds if you park there as an additional Communion service follows after the evening service.

11. Management

The Music Director is supported by the Treasurers, Parish Administrators and Webmaster in managing the choir and the music. Members are encouraged to participate in the running of the choir. If you have skills that would be of use to the choir, please advise the Music Director.

The Music Director and Assistant Organists / Accompanists are engaged by the Churchwardens on behalf of the Parochial Church Council (PCC). All other officials are voluntary.

12. Website

Notices, rehearsal and general information can be found at www.frenchaychurch.org.uk Please refer to this regularly and advertise its existence as widely as possible. There is a dedicated choir email address accessible to the music staff: music@frenchaychurch.org.uk

13. Loss, Injury or Damage

If you find anything which you believe has been lost, you should hand it to the Music Director or Music Administrator. If you have lost anything, these are also the people you should ask.

Remember to look after your belongings, and do not leave valuable items unattended. The choir does not accept any responsibility for injury, damage or loss incurred in connection with the choir activities.

14. Equal opportunities

The choir's policy is to ensure that no member, staff, visitor or other person, with whom it may come into contact, receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of sex, race, colour, sexual orientation, political affiliation or disability. By becoming a member you agree to abide by this policy.

During Communion services, it remains the personal decision of each choir member whether they wish to receive Communion, receive a blessing or remain in the choir stalls.

15. Child Protection Policy

The choir will meet in full the requirements of the Frenchay church child protection policy. Individual choir members will not need to be CRB checked. At least 2 responsible adults who

have been CRB checked will be present whenever under-18 age members are in attendance, unless their parent/guardian is also with them.

16. Data Protection Act

Under the Data Protection Act 1998 you have a general right of access to personal data held about you, and where appropriate, to have it corrected or deleted. These rights are known as “subject access rights”. Any enquiries in this regard should be directed to the Music Administrator.

The choir will only hold your contact details (address, phone number, email) for the purpose of ensuring the smooth running of the music administration.

17. Comments and Suggestions

It is the aim of the choir to provide you with the best quality experience we can. This means knowing what you want from us, what you think of your choir, and how you find the environment as a whole. From time to time you may be asked to participate in a discussion/consultation exercise, or fill in a questionnaire. You do not have to give your name, but this will obviously help in addressing any individual problems or concerns. Any information collected will be used to improve the choir and benefit you and future members.

All comments, suggestions, proposals, criticisms and complaints are taken seriously, and should be communicated to the Music Director.

18. Complaints Policy and Procedure

It is the choir's intention to put members first. We aim to do our best to ensure that all members have a successful and enjoyable experience. We are committed to continuous improvement.

We recognise, however, that sometimes mistakes can occur and things may not be done as well as they should. We are committed to ensuring that any complaints made by members are dealt with fairly and effectively to the best of our ability and within our resources. We recognise that constructive complaints can be used actively to improve performance.

If you have a complaint, first raise the matter with the Music Director who will do his best to resolve the issue. If the Music Director is unable to deal with the matter to your satisfaction, he will inform the churchwardens and the issue will be dealt with as a formal complaint. If you are unwilling to discuss the issue with the Music Director you should address your complaint directly to the Churchwardens in writing.

Complaints will be reported to the churchwardens for analysis.

19. Emergency Evacuation Procedure

Please ensure you read the specific details displayed in the choir vestry, familiarise yourself with the use of appropriate emergency equipment and the nearest means of escape, and remain vigilant at all times.

- When an alarm is raised all members, where able, must leave the building by the nearest exit and assemble in the churchyard outside the vestry door.
- Emergency exits are identified with green signs
- Any person with limited mobility, or otherwise impaired, should be assisted via the nearest and safest exit by other choir members
- Re-entry to the building is prohibited until the ALL CLEAR has been given by the Emergency Services Officer or an authorised member of the church.

20. Disclaimer

The information contained in this Handbook (v1) is, to the best of our knowledge, correct at the time of going to press. However, no liability can be accepted for any errors or omissions, which may occur within it.

Annex A – Useful contacts

Music Director – Andrew Morgan (0117 9619720)

Assistant Organists

- Alan Brown
- Vernon Hendy
- Judith Langfield
- John Lee
- Richard Morgan
- Trevor Pierpont
- Rosemary Thomas

Robes – Ann Hunt

Music Librarian – *tbd*

Music Administrator - *tbd*

Choir Archives – *tbd*

Choir Fund Treasurer – Peter Shapcott

Vicar – Stephen Pullin (0117 9584714)

Curate – Judith Lee (01454 772381)

Churchwardens:

- Mike Lee (0117 3735112)
- Ed Allingham (0117 9568461)

Annex B – Guide to Processing

Before and after services the choir enters/leaves the choir stalls in procession. The following principles apply:

General principles

- The line of people should be straight
- Look straight ahead at all times
- Do not talk, gaze around, or communicate with anyone in the congregation whilst processing
- Walk forward with a long, slow stride
- Walk in pairs, keeping together as you go
- The person on the left of each pair goes through the vestry door first
- Go round corners as sharp right-angle turns (the person on the outside should marginally speed up, the person on the inside marginally slow down to compensate)
- Keep your hands at your sides
- Carry music neatly in one hand

Entering the stalls

- When you get to the altar step, bow your heads swiftly in pairs
- Enter the stalls at the altar end
- On reaching your seat, remain standing facing the other side of the stalls

Leaving the stalls

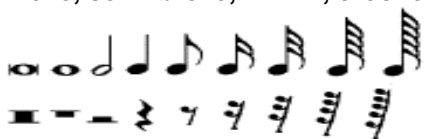
- When the cross-bearer reaches the altar step, turn to the altar and bow swiftly
- Leave the stalls at the altar end

Annex C – Guide to Reading Music

Rhythm notes

The main notes and equivalent rests are shown here. Each is half the length of the preceding note/rest. The names of the first 6 most commonly used are:

Breve, semi-breve, minim, crochet, quaver, semi-quaver



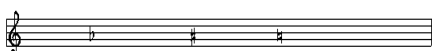
Notes on the staff



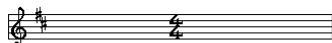
E F G A B C D E

Accidentals indicate notes a semi-tone lower (flat), a semi-tone higher (sharp) or at the natural pitch.

flat sharp natural



Clef Time signature



Key
Signature

Time signatures

The most common are (2, 3 and 4 crochets per bar respectively):

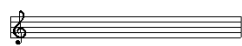
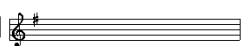

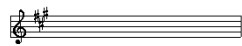
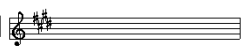
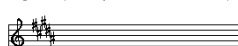


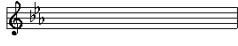

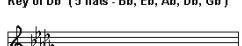
2 3 4
4 4 4

You may also see any of the following:

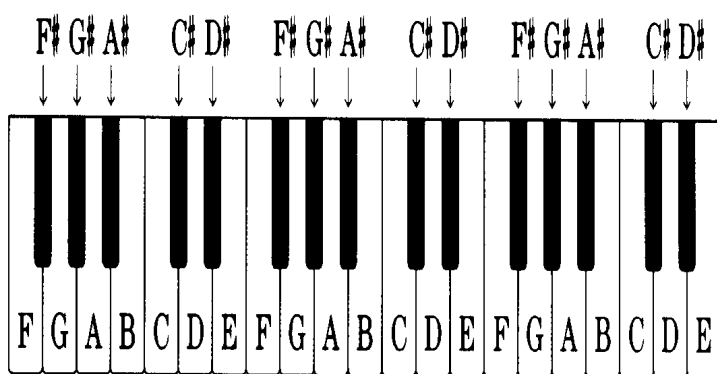
4 12 2 3 9 6 5
16 8 2 8 16 8 4

6-8 is the most common of these, meaning 6 quavers per bar, usually divided into 2 beats (of 3 quavers) per bar.

Key signatures

Key of C (no flats, no sharps)	Key of G (1 sharp - F#)	Key of D (2 sharps - F#, C#)
		
Key of A (3 sharps - F#, C#, G#)	Key of E (4 sharps - F#, C#, G#, D#)	Key of B (5 sharps - F#, C#, G#, D#, A#)
		
Key of F (1 flat - Bb)	Key of Bb (2 flats - Bb, Eb)	Key of Eb (3 flats - Bb, Eb, Ab)
		
Key of Ab (4 flats - Bb, Eb, Ab, Db)	Key of Db (5 flats - Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb)	
		

Notes on a keyboard



Dynamics

The two basic dynamic indications in music are:

p or *piano*, meaning "soft"

f or *forte*, meaning "loud" or "strong".

More subtle degrees of loudness or softness are indicated by:

mp (*mezzo-piano*), meaning "moderately-quiet"

mf (*mezzo-forte*), meaning "moderately-loud".

There are also:

ff (*fortissimo*), meaning "very loud"

pp (*pianissimo*), meaning "very quiet"

Other musical terms

The end of a piece is marked with double barlines, where the second barline is thicker. Where an end-of-piece double bar has two dots in front of it, that's called a repeat sign and the music goes back to the beginning or an earlier repeat sign.



For further information google "reading music" or try:

<http://library.thinkquest.org/13734/lesson/ltoc1.html>

<http://www.music-mind.com/Music/indexlrm.HTM>

Annex D – Choir prayer

The choir prayer is used at the end of rehearsals and after some services.

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