If your child is new to the Grace choir program—Welcome!

Singing at Grace is always an adventure!

Please read through this handbook to become acquainted with the way our choirs function. It outlines the standards and goals that will help your child become a truly outstanding member of their choir.

Your child has been given a gift of singing from God. In our choirs, your child will discover what a joy it is to develop that gift to a high level and share it with others for God’s glory.

Mr. C

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Purpose
Our primary purpose is to add a greater degree of solemnity and joy to the Services of Grace Episcopal Church.

Our secondary purposes are:

◊ To evangelize by encouraging members of the Silver Spring community to come to know the beauty of God and God’s love through beautiful and meaningful sacred music.
◊ To impart a substantial knowledge of, and love for music and singing to our members.

Goal
Our standing goal is to produce the music of the Anglican choral tradition at the highest level possible. Anglican choral music is the most challenging of any Christian denominational tradition by far and requires a high degree of skill, especially from children.

Chorister Advancement Requirements
(all choristers except 1st year)

RSCM
Participation in the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) music theory program is not a requirement of choir membership. The main classes are in the fall semester for ribbons awarded on Choir Recognition Sunday the following June. There is no cost to participate in the RSCM program.

For more information on the RSCM you may visit their website at: http://www.rscm.com/education/vfl/trainingScheme.php

To earn ribbons, choristers must:

♦ Attend RSCM classes and successfully complete a written exam and a singing portion
♦ Give one year (season) of service to the choir.

Classes
Attendance of six (6) classes is recommended as well as the completion of take-home work. Any chorister who attends six classes and conscientiously completes their take-home work and is still having difficulty with the material will be offered tutorial help by the choirmaster.
**Section Leaders**
There are a total of nine (9) junior choir section leader positions. These positions are awarded during rehearsals, and service is for two months time, four times each year. Each succeeding two months may be awarded to the same or a different chorister depending upon how well they meet the leadership Expectations.

**Senior Choir**

Senior Choir is for youth in grades 8 and above.

Grace Church does not, as yet, have a separate ensemble for our youth aged children. Senior choristers sing sometimes with the Junior Choir and sometimes with the Adult Choir. Their rehearsal overlaps the Junior Choir rehearsal by 1/2 hour, then the seniors stay and rehearse together without the Juniors. The Junior choir is a treble choir, so boys whose voices have changed are not needed during the overlap rehearsal and can arrive at 7:45pm instead. These boys may opt to rehearse with the Adult Choir on Thursday evenings instead of remaining part of the Senior Choir.

The same standards are expected of Senior choristers as Juniors. In addition, Senior choristers who cannot attend a given Sunday service or concert or dress are asked to inform the choirmaster ahead of time.

**Calendar and Schedule**
Our choir calendar is available on the Grace Church website. The calendar includes the dates & times of all rehearsals, Services and concerts.

Grace choirs typically sing from September through the second week in June, ending with Choir Recognition Sunday. Rehearsal schedules are as follows:

- Primary choristers: Wed. evenings, 6:00-7:15pm
- Junior choristers: Wed. evenings, 6:15-7:45pm
- Senior choristers: Wed. evenings, 7:15-8:30pm

All Choirs pre-Service rehearsals: Sunday mornings, **9:30am**

**Choir Policies**

**Supervision**
On Wednesdays, children are supervised only during published rehearsal times. Parents are asked to come into the church building to pick up their chorister—children are instructed not to leave the building without a parent.

On Sundays, choristers are supervised from 9:30am until the end of the service. Parents can meet their chorister in the narthex, or in the choir vesting area after service.

Choristers in grades 7 and above are released from pre-service rehearsals at 10:00am, and will be unsupervised at this time. Parents may:

- meet them when the choir is dismissed at 10:00am, or
- require them to go over and volunteer to help with Sunday School, or
- require them to stay in the chancel between 10:00am and 10:30am and process and sing the first half of the service with the adult choir.

What we want to avoid is for these choristers to be wandering about the church unsupervised during this time.
**Attendance**

It is our hope that the choir will be able to count on your chorister when prepared music is to be performed each week.

While occasional absences are expected due to illness or families being out of town, absences due to involvement in other ongoing activities are not acceptable for Grace choristers. Choristers who expect to be absent from choir activities due to involvement in other ongoing activities are asked to drop from the choir.

**Punctuality**

Punctuality is asked of all, especially on Sunday mornings—**our pre-service rehearsal at 9:30 is essential.**

**Bearing and Appearance**

All choristers are expected to remain quiet and to carry themselves respectfully during the Service. It is asked that choristers wear shoes other than tennis shoes at the Service and to be mindful of the appearance of their hair and vestments.

**Choristers as Acolytes**

Many choristers also serve as acolytes. Choristers that will serve as an acolyte on a given Sunday are still expected to:

- Arrive at 9:30am and rehearse with their choir.
- Sing the choral anthem with their choir.

**Primary Choir**

Primary Choir is for children in grades 2 & 3.

First year Primary choristers:

- Receive a black cassock when they join the choir.
- At the end of one season of service they will become full members of the choir and receive a white cotta granted on Choir Recognition Sunday.
- To eventually keep up with the choir, they need to:
  - Learn to negotiate highly complex printed scores.
  - Learn to successfully identify and negotiate their vocal register.
  - Learn to begin using their voices based on a set of specific principals including breath control, vowel shaping, and vocal placement.

**Junior Choir**

Junior Choir is for children in grades 4-7.

First year Junior choristers:

- Receive a black cassock and white cotta when they join the choir.
- Are probationary member of the choir—they become full members of the choir at the end of one season of service.
- Are eligible to join the RSCM program in their second year.

**Leadership**

Having leaders in choirs is not an option or an idle hope—it is necessary to our success. Our program rewards general leadership and musical leadership.

**General Leaders Expectations**

- Always show a positive attitude
- Set an example for the entire choir in attendance, punctuality, bearing and appearance
- Help younger choristers musically and in organizing themselves
- Assist in the organization and distribution of scores
- Help to organize processions
- Encourage and praise other choristers, especially younger choristers
- Help to build a sense of community and resolve conflicts

**Rewards**

By tradition, one Head girl chorister & one Head boy chorister is chosen by the choirmaster. The Head chorister’s term is approximately four (4) months each.

- Fall semester: September through the middle of January
- Spring semester: middle of January through May