

ST. JOHN'S CATHEDRAL CHORAL ACADEMY

CHORISTER HANDBOOK



ST. JOHN'S
CATHEDRAL

A WORD OF WELCOME

Welcome to the St. John's Cathedral Choral Academy!

As a cathedral church having served this community for over 125 years, we are foremost a House of Prayer for all people. As choristers or parents of choristers, you are a vital part of helping us be that House of Prayer. We seek to be the kind of community that Jesus Christ created and commanded: a community with open doors and a radical welcome for all people, teaching and preaching that applies to daily living in the real world, inspiring worship, closely-knit friendships, constant prayer, and a true heart for the poor and the outcast.

Since our founding, the people of St. John's have encountered God transcendentally, through the gift of the liturgy and music making at the highest level. Our choirs have an essential role in guiding and welcoming the people of God in the central actions of our liturgy, prayers, and sacraments.

We are honored that you are a part of our congregation and our ministry, and we look forward to proclaiming the love of Christ with you through our liturgy and song.

Yours in Christ,

The Very Reverend Canon Mark R. Kowalewski, Ph.D.; Dean & Rector

The Very Reverend Canon Daniel Ade, *Dean & Rector*



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MISSION

The choirs of St. John's Cathedral serve as ministers of worship in the leadership of our common spiritual life; inspiring and uplifting the prayers of our congregation – through music – to a closer communion with God. They aspire to uphold the Christian values of prayer, community and service, and to model those values in their lives.

All who are involved in our choir communities – youth, parents, adult choir members, staff musicians, and clergy – maintain a commitment to our parish fellowship through a system of open communication. This mission is best expressed in the chorister's prayer, which is recited together by our choirs after every service:

*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.*

THE CATHEDRAL CHOIRS

The music education of children has historically been a part of the ministry of St. John's Cathedral, and the founding of a Cathedral Choral Academy to re-establish formal training for both Boy and Girl choristers in the Anglican tradition is a natural evolution of that ministry. We welcome both boy and girl choristers ages 7 – 13.

Membership in the choirs is by audition. Advanced musical experience is not a prerequisite, only a love of singing and a discerning ear. The choir practices weekly from September through May. We welcome singers from all faiths – children of all cultural backgrounds are welcome to contribute to our parish liturgy using their God-given gifts.

The Choir of St. John's Cathedral was formed after the founding of St. John's Church, in 1890. Initially comprised of men and boys in the English tradition, the choir has grown to be one of the finest mixed ensembles in Los Angeles. The current choir presents a diverse range of world-class liturgical music from Michaelmas (September 29) through the Feast of Corpus Christi (late Spring).

THE CATHEDRAL ARTS GUILD

The Cathedral Arts Guild serves as a board of directors who, in collaboration with the vestry, maintain a high degree of financial support of all music ministries at St. John's Cathedral. As its mission statement:

The St. John's Cathedral Arts Guild elevates Anglican sacred music of the highest quality, and forms future generations to honor our musical legacy.

This mission is achieved through many fundraising opportunities throughout the year, to which all musicians associated with parish are expected to participate and contribute. In the 2019-2021 choir season, the Cathedral Arts Guild has taken the responsibility of underwriting the entire cost of the Choral Academy. No child will ever be turned away from participating in the Song School due to financial hardship.

MUSIC STAFF



Mr. Stephen Salts is an internationally distinguished Fulbright scholar of choral music. As a conductor, he has enjoyed directing choirs throughout the United States, United Kingdom, and Europe. Highlights of his early conducting career include performances at Westminster Abbey in London, four of the major Basilicas in Rome, and venues in New York City and Los Angeles. In addition to his conducting engagements, he is in demand as a bass-baritone. He has been featured as both a soloist and a chorister on major studio recordings released by Hyperion Records, for whom he also co-authored liner notes on a recording of

contemporary American choral music. Some of Stephen's singing highlights include performing for Her Majesty The Queen, holding weeklong residencies at St Paul's Cathedral in London and Canterbury Cathedral, and singing with the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

Stephen earned degrees in music from Florida State University, California State University, Long Beach, and Royal Holloway - University of London. He attended Royal Holloway on a Fulbright Postgraduate Award for research focused on the Anglican choral tradition. An avid church musician, he is a staff singer at St James' in the City Episcopal Church in Los Angeles, served as the

Founding Director of the Song School music education program at St Wilfrid's Episcopal Church in Huntington Beach.



Mr. Zachary Neufeld is highly regarded as an organist, keyboard collaborator, composer, and lecturer. He is a composer of a diverse range of work, including choral, orchestral, chamber, and electronic music. As a keyboard collaborator, recent performances include selections from *Winterreise* with tenor Thomas Segen for the Los Angeles Philharmonic's *Inside the Music* series at Disney Hall, the piano-four-hands arrangement of *Barber of Seville* with Pacific Opera Project, as well as masterclasses with Susan Graham, John Bucchino, and Speranza Scappucci.

Mr. Neufeld's recent work, *Let All Things Know Peace* for a cappella choir, was premiered by the LA chamber choir *Inspiravi* as part of their emerging composers series.

His *Preces & Responses* were premiered by *Ensemble XXI* in 2016, and published by Paraclete Press.

He is equally at home in a jazz setting as in an opera masterclass or church service, and regularly plays keyboard with jazz and pop combos in the Southern California area. He earned an Master of Arts degree in Composition from UCLA, and a Bachelor of Music degree in Composition from the University of Redlands. He is currently a doctoral candidate in composition at the University of California Los Angeles, and was recently awarded the prestigious Dissertation Year Fellowship.

Dr. Christopher Gravis is an American choral and orchestral conductor, composer, and lecturer. He is considered a specialist in the area of English choral-orchestral masterworks, and of Anglican liturgical music. Alongside a robust liturgical music season at St. John's Cathedral, Dr. Gravis conducts monthly services of Choral Evensong, Compline, and is internationally sought after as a guest conductor. Most recently, he guest-conducted the Choir of Queens' College, Cambridge in October of 2018.



Active as both a choral and orchestral conductor, Gravis made his debut with the San Diego Symphony in 2014, and recently finished several seasons leading the acclaimed Orange Coast College Symphony. Dr. Gravis is also a composer of choral and liturgical music. His setting of the *Preces & Responses* was premiered at Canterbury Cathedral in 2016.

In addition to his responsibilities at St. John's Cathedral, he serves as Assistant Professor & Director of Choral Activities at California State University Los Angeles. For seven years he served as Director of Music at St. Wilfrid of York Episcopal Church, where he led the choir in residence at St. Paul's Cathedral – London.

Christopher was born and raised in Southern California, and earned degrees in music from the University of Redlands, California State University - Fullerton, and the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music.

ATTENDANCE

Choristers are required to attend all rehearsals, services, concerts, tours, retreats and special training sessions. Parents are asked to make certain that their children arrive at least 10 minutes in advance of the start time, and to collect their children no later than 10 minutes following the conclusion of rehearsals. Planned absences may be arranged in advance and are subject to approval by the Choral Academy Director. For those unable to attend a rehearsal due to illness, please notify Mr. Salts immediately. In the rare event that a rehearsal or service must be cancelled, St. John's Cathedral will provide prompt notification via our website and email.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

Thursdays	5:00 – 5:15pm	Drop Off
	5:15 – 5:45 pm	Group Dinner
	5:45 – 6:45 pm	Rehearsal
	6:45 – 7:00pm	Pick Up

Fourth Saturdays	10:00 – 12:00 am	Musicianship Training
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Please be aware that there will be extra rehearsals during the Advent/Christmas seasons, Holy Week and Easter, and when special concerts are presented. Please check your calendar for details.

SERVICE SCHEDULE

3 rd Sundays	9:30 am	Choristers vest & rehearse
	11:00 am	Choral Eucharist
Last Thursdays	6:30 pm	Evensong

BEHAVIOR

St. John's Cathedral places a high standard on conduct of all choristers as leaders in ministry. The following guidelines are to be followed:

- Apply yourself to doing your best work and dedicate your efforts to the glory of God who gave you your voice.
- Approach your work and your companions in a spirit of dignity and respect.
- Be mindful of how you present yourself when participating in worship services.
- Keep your materials – music, choir vestments, and folders, in good order, and return them to their proper place after rehearsals and services.
- Please treat all parish facilities with care and respect; avoid leaving trash or personal belonging in the Church and the Song School.
- Physical altercations, bullying or verbal harassment will not be tolerated and will result in the immediate suspension or expulsion from the choir of all parties involved. This includes “boys will be boys/girls will be girls” kind of roughhousing or language.
- Follow the direction of the Clergy and Music Staff.
- Refrain from the use of illegal drugs and alcohol.
- Choristers are not permitted to use tech devices such as iPhones, iPads, etc when attending rehearsals and/or services.

APPEARANCE & UNIFORM

Choir attire falls into two categories: vestments and uniforms. Vestments are comprised of a red cassock, white surplice, and ruff.

Each choir wears a distinctive uniform that is required for Sunday services (to be worn upon arrival, and under vestments during the service).

- Girls wear a navy skirt and white blouse, dark tights (optional), and black closed-toe flats.
- Boys wear gray slacks, white dress shirt, black socks, and black dress shoes.

Please discuss sources for the purchase of these items with the Choir Matron.

Additionally, each chorister will be given a Choral Academy polo shirt to be worn during weekly to rehearsals, evensongs, and to Saturday morning musicianship class. The Song School polo shirt may be worn outside of the parish as well, to school, or around town.

It is the chorister's responsibility to keep his or her uniform clean and well-tended. Vestments should be cleaned and pressed every three months, and always before principal feasts of the Church such as Christmas and Easter. If you have outgrown your vestments or uniform, please contact the Choir Matron to arrange a fitting.

It is important to note that choristers presenting themselves for any service "out of uniform" will not be permitted to participate.

WEEKLY NEWSLETTER & PROGRESS REPORTS

A weekly email will be sent to parents and guardians detailing upcoming rehearsals, services, and other special events.

At Christmas, Mid-Lent, and the final Sunday of the choir season, a brief written report on the progress of each chorister will be provided to parents. This will address each chorister's level of effort, musical development, and conduct.

CHORISTER PARENTS' GUILD

Our Chorister Parents' Guild includes all parents of Girl and Boy choristers, upholding its role:

- To nurture the development of our children spiritually and musically.
- To be a network of hands-on resources for the activities of our Boys' and Girls' Choirs, in support of the Clergy and Music Staff.
- Participating in rotation as parents-on-duty during choir rehearsals (always ensuring that there are two un-related adults present at all times), as well as assisting the kitchen staff in donation and preparation of choir meals and snacks.
- Raising funds for the choir tours and pilgrimages that occur every three years (see *Tours & Pilgrimages*).
- Maintaining choir vestments and uniforms entrusted to their sons or daughters, seeing to the regular cleaning and pressing of the vestments (see *Appearance & Uniform*).
- To connect that work more closely with the parish community at large.

PARENTAL EXPECTATIONS

The St. John's Cathedral Arts Guild invests significantly in the lives of all the boys and girls of its academy. This investment originated from a profound commitment to their spiritual and personal growth. In 2019-2021, we are proud to offer this opportunity and experience without a fee: every chorister is on full scholarship. Our children receive training from professional musicians and educators respected in the field of our choral tradition, both as performers and as academics. What is more, choristers receive pastoral care from the Clergy of the Cathedral. The average annual cost to subsidize each chorister through our curriculum exceeds \$750 – based on a maximum capacity of 16 boys and 16 girls.

Accordingly, St. John's Cathedral asks all parents to support the work of their children by upholding the following principles:

- Contribute to the life of our choirs and the parish through service and prayer.
- Help us to maintain a safe, nurturing environment for all choristers.
- Ensure that they are prepared and punctual for all scheduled commitments and appropriately dressed.
- Participate in one or more of the Chorister Parents' Guild committees, such as the rota of parental supervision at weekly rehearsals and monthly services.
- Arrive on time to greet your child at the end of rehearsal or performance times.
- Do your best to acquaint yourself with the traditions of the Episcopal Church, so that you can better assist your child to understand all choir guidelines.
- Become acquainted with the Cathedral Choral Academy Director, Canon for Music Ministry & Arts, Clergy, and Cathedral Staff.

CHURCH AS A PLACE OF SANCTUARY

By long-standing tradition and accordance with the commandments of God, we affirm that the Church is a place where all people have a right to feel safe; everyone who enters this place, including our choristers, staff, parishioners, and visitors has the right to feel that they are secure, welcome, and valued.

To ensure the safety of all people in this parish community, and most especially to guard the well-being of our children and youth, we will uphold these safety policies:

- All adults who have regular contact with our children and youth (including adult choir members) will be trained in the *Safeguarding God's Children* program, and will be known to the parish staff for at least six months before being placed in charge of any group of youth or children (*see below*).
- We will practice the policy of having at least two non-related adults present with our children and youth at all times. Any exception to this policy will be in clear emergency situations only, and for as brief a time as possible.
- We will not allow our youth and children to wander or loiter on the cathedral campus unsupervised, or to leave a building without appropriate adult supervision.
- We will release children only to their known parents or guardians unless we have written instructions to release the child to another adult. We reserve the right to ask for official identification if there is any question about the identity of the person asking for the child.
- We will not tolerate any form of hazing or physical or verbal abuse in our community, nor will we allow the berating of any member of our choirs or parish staff. Suspension or dismissal will result from violations of this guideline.

SAFEGUARDING GOD'S CHILDREN & SAFEGUARDING GOD'S PEOPLE

All adult choir members (ages 18 and over), as well as every parent or legal guardian who has a child enrolled in one of our choirs, is required to complete an online training course, *Safeguarding God's Children*, within two weeks of enrollment in the program (see below). All information necessary for completing this training will be provided to you by the Canon for Music & Cathedral Arts.

CHOIR TOURS – PILGRIMAGES, LITURGIES & CONCERTS

St. John's Cathedral maintains a tradition of diocesan, international choir tours. These educational experiences further deepen the choristers' understanding of their role in the parish's mission of outreach. Choir tours are not "family vacations," or "field trips," but high-profile ventures made possible by a professional standard of commitment. In each case, a careful balance is maintained between work and leisure. Participation in these tours is a privilege, not a right, and will involve significant extra preparation and commitment.

International Pilgrimages will be undertaken regularly, every three years. These journeys offer rare opportunities to experience foreign cultures first hand, and to make a contribution to each chorister's spiritual and artistic life experience. In addition, pilgrimages will involve special projects emphasizing service to the poor and disadvantaged.

The cost of an international pilgrimage is considerable, and our Chorister Parents' Guild plays an important role in efforts to raise funds for these special opportunities. Each family is asked to make a contribution toward expenses of these tours, with remaining costs subsidized through fund raising events and support from the Music Guild. Families facing economic hardship may apply for scholarship assistance by contacting the Canon for Music Ministry & Cathedral Arts.

Diocesan Mission Trips: As a flagship parish in the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, our choirs are regularly invited to sing in other churches and at special diocesan events. We also participate periodically with our brother and sister choirs within the diocese in special liturgies and join concerts.

ESTABLISHING A COVENANT RELATIONSHIP

A covenant relationship is established on the defining principles of mutual trust and commitment. The covenant established between St. John's Cathedral and choristers and their families is intended to create:

- An environment in which mutual respect and courtesy create a sense of safety, collegiality and Christian community.
- An environment in which order and dignity are kept so that each person is empowered to do his or her best work.
- An environment in which the values of St. John's Cathedral, and the larger Episcopal Church are upheld and respected.

To foster a sense of community among our children and youth choristers, we are happy to offer:

- Yearly retreats, offering musical instruction, prayer, reflection, and recreational time.
- Occasional social events or outings for choristers, and events in which all youth and children of the parish community may gather.
- Opportunity for religious instruction, both in conjunction with the music program and during Sunday offerings. (It is not our desire or intent to convert children of other faiths, but we fully welcome their participation and inquiries.)
- Opportunities for service and outreach, both relating specifically to choir participation and through wider parish service work opportunities.
- An outstanding foundation in music and singing at minimal cost, along with the opportunity to sing with professional musicians at the highest levels of performance.

To foster a sense of community among our choir parents we are happy to offer:

- A Chorister Parents' Guild, with opportunities to become involved in the routine of the choir.
- An open invitation to participate in the life of the parish community, including worship, outreach service, and social events.
- Opportunities for education and discussion around a variety of topics, including formation, confirmation, our Book of Common Prayer, and liturgical life.
- Chorister Parents' Guild dinners, to be arranged by the Guild.

CONTACTS

It is our sincere intention to communicate with you in a timely manner. Please make certain that the church office is updated with any changes in your contact information. Most scheduling details can be found on the cathedral website at www.stjohnsla.org

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Dr. Christopher Gravis or Mr. Stephen Salts:

Music Office Phone (213) 747-6285 ext. 106

Mr. Gravis	cgravis@stjohnsla.org	(714) 566-5962 cell
Mr. Salts	ssalts@stjohnsla.org	(561) 866-9293 cell

Dr. Gravis and Mr. Salts are pleased to meet with parents to discuss the progress of their choristers or related family situations of importance. Because rehearsal and service times are the busiest periods of the week, please call or email to schedule an appointment in advance, outside of rehearsal and service times.