St. Wilfrid of York

Song School

Chorister Handbook

Hallelujah!
Sing to the Lord a new song;
sing his praise in the congregation of the faithful.

-Psalm 149
A WORD OF WELCOME

Welcome to the Choirs of St. Wilfrid of York Episcopal Church!

As a parish having served this community for fifty-five 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. Wilfrid of York have encountered God transcendently, 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 Reverend Michael D. Archer, Rector
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MISSION

The choirs of St. Wilfrid of York 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 PARISH CHOIRS

The music education of children has always been a part of the ministry of St. Wilfrid of York, and the founding of a Song School to establish formal training for both Boy and Girl choristers in the Anglican tradition is a natural evolution of that ministry. 2015 marks the start of that Song School, comprised of both boy and girl choristers ages 7 – 13.

Boys sing in the St. Nicholas Choir, and girls sing in the St. Cecilia Choir. 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 to Trinity Sunday. 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. Wilfrid of York is the adult semi-professional mixed-voice ensemble that sings at the weekly 10:00 am Eucharist, as well as for monthly services of Choral Evensong. The Choir has recently sung in residence at St. Paul’s Cathedral - London, and will embark on their second major recording project to be released in Advent of 2015.
THE MUSIC GUILD

The Music Guild serves as a board of people who maintain a high degree of financial support of all music ministries at St. Wilfrid of York Episcopal Church. As its mission statement:

_The St. Wilfrid of York Music 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 2015–’16 choir season, the Music Guild has taken the responsibility of underwriting the entire cost of the Song School, with the exception of the individual commitment fee for each participant. As the success of the Song School develops this financial burden will be re-evaluated accordingly. No child will ever be turned away from participating in the Song School due to financial hardship.

MUSIC STAFF

**Stephen Salts** is a choral conductor and singer based in Long Beach. Stephen has earned three degrees in music, including the Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from Florida State University, Master of Music in Choral Conducting from the Cole Conservatory of Music at California State University-Long Beach, and Master of Music in Advanced Musical Studies from one of the leading music departments in the United Kingdom at Royal Holloway-University of London.

In 2014, Stephen was awarded the prestigious Fulbright Scholarship to research the Anglican choral tradition in the United Kingdom. During his time in England, he enjoyed conducting the Royal Holloway Founder’s Choir, as well as singing with the world-renowned Choir of Royal Holloway, for whom he was the Assistant Conductor. Stephen regularly conducted services of Morning Prayer, Choral Evensong, and Choral Eucharist at Royal Holloway, where he studied with celebrated conductor, Rupert Gough. In England, Stephen recorded multiple albums
of choral music, performed on BBC radio and television, sang for The Royal Family, coached singing with The King’s Singers, collaborated with the conducting program at the Royal Academy of Music, traveled to the major English cathedrals, and conducted a service of Choral Evensong at Westminster Abbey.

Stephen has now returned to southern California following his accomplished year in the United Kingdom, and is thrilled to be leading the Song School at St Wilfrid of York Episcopal Church as Master of Choristers. In addition to his work at St Wilfrid’s, he is a staff singer at St James’ in the City Episcopal Church (Los Angeles), and regularly performs with the many professional choirs throughout Southern California.

Stephen Karr is a conductor, organist and pianist based in Southern California, specializing in sacred and operatic vocal music. He has earned degrees in organ performance from Mercer University and Westminster Choir College, studying under Robert Parris and Stefan Engels respectively, as well as a Master of Music degree in orchestral conducting from UCLA under the tutelage of Neal Stulberg.

His accomplishments include first prizes at the 2000 Atlanta AGO scholarship competition and the 2001 National Undergraduate Organ Competition in Ottumwa, Iowa; finalist status at the 1999 AGO Regional Competition for Young Organists in Knoxville, Tennessee and West Chester University’s Annual International Organ Competition in 2003; performances at such venues as the Philadelphia Episcopal Cathedral, the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta, First Congregational Church in Los Angeles, and repeat engagements at the Princeton University Chapel.

As a church musician in Southern California, Stephen has served the parishes of St. Thomas the Apostle in Hollywood, St. Mark in Glendale, St. Athanasius at the Cathedral Center of Sts. Peter and Paul in Echo Park, St. Clement in San Clemente, and is currently organist at St. Wilfrid of York in Huntington Beach.

As a conductor, his repertoire spans six centuries, from the Los Angeles premiere of Francesco Cavalli’s La Calisto (1653) to the world premiere of The First Lady (2010), an opera by composer and psychiatrist Kenneth Wells based on Eleanor Roosevelt’s experiences between her husband’s death and VE Day in 1945. He is a co-founder of Pacific Opera Project, for which he has conducted productions of the Mozart/da Ponte trilogy, Sweeney Todd, The Turn of the Screw, Ariadne auf Naxos and an upcoming
Falstaff, among others. He is on staff with Opera UCLA and resides with his wife, Hannah Waldman and their son Leonard in El Segundo.

Christopher Gravis is an American conductor. He recently led the San Diego Symphony, and led a week-long residency at St. Paul’s Cathedral, London with the Choir of St. Wilfrid of York. At the invitation of Lady Suzi Digby, OBE he participated in research at Cambridge University in the area of early English polyphony. In August of 2015 he will return to England to conduct in residence with the Clarion Singers at Canterbury Cathedral. Future engagements for 2015 | ’16 include conducting the LA Schola and the Clarion Singers.

As a professor, Mr. Gravis was honored to serve a full-time sabbatical replacement at California State University, Fullerton, as well as having taught conducting at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music. He has prepared choruses for John Williams and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Keith Lockhart and Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, and John Mauceri with the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra.

In addition to his professional and academic work, Mr. Gravis has been the Director of Music at St. Wilfrid of York Episcopal Church for the past five years where he has developed a robust choral program in the Anglican cathedral tradition. They are recognized as one the finest sacred music programs in Southern California, and present a full season of musical liturgical services including Choral Evensong and the famous Advent Procession of Lessons & Carols. Also of composer of liturgical music, in May of 2015 the Choir of St. Wilfrid’s Episcopal Church premiered Mr. Gravis’ new setting of the Preces & Responses.

Mr. Gravis, a California native, earned a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Redlands, studied conducting in Salzburg, Austria. He earned a Master of Music degree in Conducting from California State University Fullerton, and is currently Doctoral candidate (ABD) at the University of Southern California Thornton School of Music. He is in demand throughout the country as a conductor, lecturer, and clinician.
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 Song School Choirmaster. 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. Wilfrid of York will provide prompt notification via our website and email.

REHEARSAL SCHEDULE

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Choir</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mondays</td>
<td>4:00 – 5:15 pm</td>
<td>Boys’ Choir</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6:00 – 7:15 pm</td>
<td>Girls’ Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>4:00 – 5:15 pm</td>
<td>Boys’ Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6:00 – 7:15 pm</td>
<td>Girls’ Choir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Saturdays</td>
<td>10:00 – 12:00 am</td>
<td>Boys/Girls musicianship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sundays</td>
<td>9:00 am</td>
<td>Choristers vest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd monthly</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Choral Eucharist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>alternating boys and girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesdays</td>
<td>5:00 pm</td>
<td>Evensong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st &amp; 3rd monthly alternating boys and girls</td>
<td>Dinner follows</td>
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Please consult the monthly calendar for exceptions to the 1st and 3rd Wednesday routine.
**BEHAVIOR**

St. Wilfrid of York Episcopal Church 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.

**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 Song School 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.

PROGRESS REPORTS

At Christmas, Mid-Lent, and the final Sunday of the choir season (Trinity Sunday), 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 preparation of choir meals.
• 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. Wilfrid of York Music Guild invests significantly in the lives of all the boys and girls of its choirs. This investment originated from a profound commitment to their spiritual and personal growth. In 2015 | ’16, 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 Rector and Associate Clergy of the parish. The average annual cost to subsidize each chorister through our curriculum exceeds $2,000 – based on a maximum capacity of 16 boys and 16 girls.

Accordingly, St. Wilfrid of York 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.
• 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 Song School Choirmaster, Minister of Music & Arts, Clergy, and parish 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 parish 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 Minister of Music & Arts.
CHOIR TOURS – PILGRIMAGES, LITURGIES & CONCERTS

St. Wilfrid of York 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 are 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 Minister of Music & 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. Wilfrid of York Episcopal Church 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. Wilfrid of York, 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 chorister 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 parish website at www.stwilfridschurch.org.

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

Mr. Gravis  chris@stwilfridschurch.org
Mr. Salts    stephens@stwilfridschurch.org

Mr. 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.