The Choir School Handbook
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Presbyterian Church Mission Statement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choir Statement of Purpose</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Information</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admittance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation with the Royal School of Church Music</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Choir School of First Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginners, Choristers, Head Chorister, Teen Choristers, Adults</td>
<td>2-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Discipleship</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregation and Community Involvement</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sacrament of Holy Communion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Choir as Family</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance Policy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctuality</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Leadership</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Singers</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Choir School Participation</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levels of Achievement</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSCM Awards</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Standards System</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Resources</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vestments and Music</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress Code</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe Church</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly Rehearsal Schedule</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choir School Plan B Option</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekday Parking</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Parking</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entering First Presbyterian Church</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety Guidelines for Choristers</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Music Support Committee</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Parent/Child Relationship in the Context of Rehearsals and Presentations</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunities for Parents</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Schedule</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer (Come and Sing!) Choir</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreat</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First Presbyterian Church Mission Statement

“First Presbyterian Church is called to embody God’s love, made known in Jesus Christ, in life-giving ways, and to engage with God in transforming lives, communities, and institutions to reflect God’s goodness. As a community of open-minded, open-hearted disciples, we covenant to support and encourage one another as we explore God’s grace on our journey of faith.”

Choir Statement of Purpose

The Choir exists in order to lead people in the worship of God, to provide for the musical training of children, teenagers, and adults, and to enhance the cultural life of the community.

The Choir is supported and provided for by the congregation of First Presbyterian Church and its Music Support Committee. The Music Support Committee is also responsible for all the music programs of the church including the Handbell programs and the Flute Choir. (See p. 12 for further information on the Music Support Committee.)

General Information

The Choir and Choir School of First Presbyterian Church are modeled after highly respected American choir programs that are originally rooted in the English choral tradition. The Choir of First Presbyterian Church is an affiliate of the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM), an organization dedicated to the promotion of high standards in church music. RSCM America is the North American branch of the RSCM specifically dedicated to the culture and churches located here. The training scheme of the RSCM for all age groups is A Voice for Life.

Admittance

The Choir consists of volunteer musicians and is open to any member or friend of the congregation of First Presbyterian Church. Children entering the choir in second grade may have completed the training and experience provided by the Tower Choir. The Tower Choir consists of children in grades K-1 who participate in PYE on Thursday afternoons. Children, beginning in second grade, may enroll in the Choir School. They become full members of the Choir after completing training as Beginners. Teen Choristers (defined as boys whose voices have changed and girls who are in ninth grade or higher) and adults may become members of the Choir by scheduling an interview with the Choirmaster. The ability to match pitch and blend with the choral ensemble are the two prerequisites to join the Choir. Sopranos, in particular, must be able to blend with the pure head tone of the chorister section.
Affiliation with the Royal School of Church Music

The Choir of First Presbyterian Church is affiliated with the Royal School of Church Music. Although the RSCM was founded within the Church of England in 1927, it has evolved into a worldwide organization that has more than 9,000 affiliated churches, colleges, and schools. All denominations within the World Council of Churches are represented. In addition to providing Voice for Life, the RSCM offers training courses, summer camps, and festivals. This method emphasizes deportment, social skills, group leadership, and musical terminology. Voice for Life has materials and resources for all ages including beginner, intermediate and experienced adults.

The Choir School of First Presbyterian Church

The Choir School of First Presbyterian Church is an intergenerational program that provides boys and girls (beginning in second grade) and teenagers with a proven and carefully graded music education, preparing them to achieve their full potential as choristers. These children and youth join adult singers in the English choral tradition to sing great choral music that spans five centuries of composition. Group and some individual instruction are provided for each member who enters the program.

Beginners

Children who are rising 2-3 graders enter the Choir School as Beginners. (Tower Choir is for children in grades K-1.) As Beginners become integrated into the choir, they are assisted by an older child “shepherd,” with whom they share music and who leads them through the service and liturgy. Beginners wear the red cassock for worship services.

After Beginner training has been completed, the child is promoted. During the promotion ceremony, Beginners are awarded the white cotta and receive a promotion certificate. These young singers learn to sit with the Choir in services and concerts and perform selected repertoire depending on their individual progress. At the beginning of the semester, a schedule of specific Sundays when Beginners will sit with the choir is published.

Choristers

Choristers are fully commissioned members of the choir in grades 4-8 and wear the red cassock, white cotta and RSCM medal. Choristers are always learning and expanding their knowledge of music and liturgy. All choristers work on completing one of the three levels, light blue, dark blue and red. When the level has been completed, the singer is awarded that color ribbon to hold their
RSCM medal. Depending on individual progress, completing the Level of Achievement and progressing to the next level takes about two years. Each chorister keeps in their folder a card outlining the requirements for their level. Each card outlines Six Basic Habits, Six Basic Skills, Basic Christian Discipleship and Personal Qualities. It is the responsibility of the chorister to bring the card to the choirmaster to sign off on any individual item.

As Choristers progress through the Chorister Training program, they develop individual leadership skills, teamwork, and often learn by teaching younger choristers around them. Shepherding a younger chorister is a task that requires maturity and skill. All Choristers develop these skills through the singing of a wide variety of music and the Chorister Training program.

For complete details of the requirements for the light blue, dark blue and red levels, please contact the Choirmaster.

**Head Chorister**

The *Head Chorister* is appointed to serve as leader for the choir teams. Traditionally, the Choir consists of two teams which are referred to as *Decani* (choir members on the south side of a cathedral) and *Cantoris* (choir members on the north side of a cathedral). Head Choristers are identified by the Head Chorister medal and show outstanding maturity, musical leadership, and social poise. Head Choristers set a professional example for other choristers and go about their work in a supportive and positive manner. They exhibit exemplary commitment to the life and work of the Choir and church.

**Teen Choristers**

*Teen Choristers* are boys whose voices have changed and girls in High School. These singers wear the Royal School of Church Music medal with a white ribbon, or the ribbon earned as a Chorister. Individuals who enter the program at this level progress through a series of achievements that are structured particularly for their age. Teen singers continue to develop skills and adjust to their voice using materials supplied by the RSCM *Voice for Life* program. Emphasis is placed on continuing to develop sight reading, other musical skills, and leadership in the Adult section of the choir. The Teen group may also make special musical presentations in worship.
Adults
The RSCM has recently published excellent materials to help in the training of adults as a part of the Voice for Life program. There are materials for Beginning Adults, Intermediate Adults and Advanced Adults. All of these materials allow adult members of the choir to grow in their own skills and confidence in singing.

In addition to the regular rehearsal schedule, adults may schedule individual or small group lessons with the Choirmaster. Sessions can be arranged periodically or at regular intervals. By increasing individual musicianship, everyone can contribute more fully in the production of excellent choral tone and ensemble. Occasionally, additional adult sectional rehearsals will be scheduled.

Christian Discipleship
In addition to musical training, Presbyterian Youth Explosion (PYE), (grades K-8), First Light (grades 9-12), and choir programs provide an opportunity for Christian formation as participants develop a disciplined approach to Christian education, liturgy, and spirituality. Choristers also develop an increased awareness of their stewardship of time, talents, and faith. All music program participants are strongly encouraged to take part in Christian Education at First Presbyterian Church.

Congregation and Community Involvement
The unique educational opportunities of the Choir School and other music programs of First Presbyterian are extended to the Evansville community and to persons of other religious traditions. Individuals and families do not have to be Presbyterian or members of First Presbyterian Church to participate in the music program.

Although Christian education is an integral part of the music program and we believe that the children need to understand the words they sing, the religious beliefs of participating families will always be respected. Beyond the commitment to the choir rehearsal and presentation schedule, we welcome the participation of your family and your children in all the activities of church life to whatever extent you feel comfortable.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion
Communion is regularly received at First Presbyterian Church during worship and all baptized Christians of any age and denomination are invited to participate. No stigma, however, is attached to those who do not receive the Sacrament. Each family may decide on this aspect of their child’s participation. The Pastors and Choirmaster are available for consultation.
The Choir As Family

The choir program first and foremost focuses on work that is done to realize our mission statement. The fun and satisfaction that are derived from participating in the choir program are a result of work well done.

Participants know that a structured and disciplined approach can provide the framework to increase motivation and incentive so that skills may be learned and personal qualities developed with enjoyment. Furthermore, we can collectively make music for the glory of God with increased confidence and expertise.

The work of the Choir can never be encapsulated into any one rehearsal, presentation, or experience. Instead, the choir experience is an ongoing process. In addition to the benefits that are described in the preceding paragraph, the choir program builds community. All participants are contributing to an end and are experiencing connection in the process. That connection is with one another, as individuals and families, and also with historical and artistic legacy that spans many centuries and cultures.

The Music Support Committee arranges numerous social events to bond our community together. The opportunities are many and varied, including Thursday supper with PYE, adult social gatherings, and activities and lunch with dress rehearsals. As a result, life-long friendships can be fostered and nurtured as we build up one another in fellowship.

Attendance Policy

Commitment to faithful attendance, punctuality, and diligence on the part of all participants and their families ensures the success of the choral program year after year. A detailed schedule of rehearsals and presentations is available before the choir season begins so that these dates can be incorporated into everyone’s family calendar. In addition to the regular weekly schedule, our commitment to special services, concerts and choir trips is essential as we provide leadership and outreach in our community.

Everyone is expected to be present for all rehearsals. Obviously, this is not always possible. Please consult the Choirmaster regarding your participation when a previous rehearsal has been missed, or when two out of three previous rehearsals have been missed. This ensures that everyone knows the anthem, is prepared to sing, and respects the other members of the choir.

Known absences among Teen and Adult participants must be dated and registered in the Red Book of Excused Absences kept just outside the sanctuary balcony. In addition to signing out, please verbally communicate the need to be absent to the Choirmaster. Any absence that is not verbally communicated to the Choirmaster or signed out is considered unexcused. This policy is necessary for the planning of rehearsals and to avoid last-minute changes in the music that is programmed for services. Furthermore, it impresses on everyone that they are valued and missed!
Dress Rehearsals are clearly marked on the Rehearsal Schedule. Attendance at Dress Rehearsals is required unless you are experiencing a family emergency.

In regard to last minute emergencies, please call the church office (812-423-6297).

Everyone who is not out of town is expected to participate in the two major festivals of the Church year: Christmas Eve and Easter Day.

**Punctuality**

Regular attendance and punctuality are two cornerstones of a successful choir program. Furthermore, punctuality is a mark of self-discipline and respect for a common endeavor.

Every singer is expected to arrive at least five (5) minutes before a rehearsal is scheduled to begin so that everyone can be in their assigned position, with their music folder and pencil, ready to sing the first vocalization.

When unavoidable circumstances necessitate a late arrival, please inform the Choirmaster of the situation in advance whenever possible. When last minute emergencies prevent punctual arrival, please feel comfortable to join the rehearsal which is already in progress.

As a courtesy to the Choir, latecomers who have not made a previous communication, should approach the Choirmaster after the rehearsal to explain the situation. This policy should not be interpreted as a punitive or demeaning response. Instead, the policy reinforces a healthy sensitivity to a common endeavor.

As role models, teenagers and adults must remember that their punctuality and attendance determine, in part, the rate at which each child progresses through the levels of the Chorister Training Scheme. Older singers need to establish excellent examples of attendance and punctuality.

**Adult Leadership**

Adult demeanor in rehearsals and services has a profound influence upon younger musicians. Everyone is asked to approach and participate in rehearsals and services in a positive manner. Please express any negative comments or opinions by contacting the Choirmaster outside of scheduled rehearsals and services.
Staff Singers

Staff Singers can be incorporated in the choir program as one element among other facets of the program, to support all members of the choir in reaching their full potential. All singers, volunteer and paid, exhibit the same professional commitment.

Acousticians describe how the effect of one violin is always different than the tone produced by an ensemble of violins. This is an acoustical phenomenon that is experienced with singers as well. One soprano will always sound like one soprano. Choral tone is only achieved by the combination of voices. Consequently, Staff Singers provide support and leadership within the Choir but are never a substitute for volunteers.

Communication

Please contact the Choir Master by stopping in the office, calling (812) 423-6297, or emailing robertn@firstpresevansville to discuss any aspect of the music program. The same number may be used to leave any messages for members of the Music Support Committee. (Weekday rehearsals and Sunday mornings are often too hectic for the Choirmaster’s full attention!) The Committee and Staff are committed to making your involvement in the music program at First Presbyterian Church spiritually enriching, artistically satisfying, and socially rewarding. The Music Support Committee occasionally institutes a telephone tree to contact members of the choir in case of last minute messages or changes in the rehearsal schedule (normally only due to adverse weather conditions).

Health and Choir School Participation

Choir School rehearsals, services and concerts require the highest level of concentration and deportment that would be comparable to the most demanding and rewarding scenarios a child would experience in public or private school. Consequently, parents need to take responsibility in monitoring each child’s diet, medication (if necessary), and sleep to help the child perform his or her best in Choir School activities.

- **Diet:** Food, candy, and drinks that have high quantities of sugar are to be avoided preceding all Choir School activities.
- **Sleep:** A good night’s sleep preceding Choir School rehearsals, and especially Choir School services and concerts is a prerequisite.
- **Communication:** Parents and the Choirmaster should communicate as often as necessary to evaluate Choir School performance and the welfare of the child.
Training

Choristers develop skills, attitudes, and good habits through the three-level Chorister Training Scheme, in addition to gaining self-esteem and confidence. The curriculum includes many areas of musical and liturgical development:

- Poise and posture in rehearsal
- Breathing and vocal production (singing!)
- Reading music
- Sight singing
- Ear training (melodic and rhythmic dictation)
- Echo singing and echo clapping
- English diction and Latin pronunciation
- Singing in other languages
- Conducting
- Studying choral repertoire from all style periods
- Understanding the role of the Choir in Worship and the tradition of church music
- First Kids Christian Education

Levels of Achievement

The three levels of Achievement - Light Blue, Dark Blue, and Red - have corresponding ribbons that are earned by completing a card of requirements. The choir trainer evaluates the singers’ progress over a period of time. Often there will not be a specific date when a skill is learned. Rather a unit is considered complete only when the skill is both regular and consistent. The assessments are cumulative: habits and skills formed for Light Blue level are maintained and developed at Dark Blue and Red levels.

At each level, a singer’s progress and attainment is assessed in relation to the following:

Six Habits
- Responding, Attention and Care, Listening and Looking, Watching the Choirmaster and Following Signs, Breathing, Movement

Six Skills
- Joining in, Aural Skills, Music Reading, Tone, High Notes, Held Notes

Basic Christian Discipleship
- Liturgical year, Worship, Bible, Prayer

Personal Qualities
- Effort, Helpful, Attitude, Attendance, Care of Music, Tidiness.

Students are also promoted to higher levels of achievement as a result of their individual accomplishments. Consequently, some singers may be promoted more quickly than others. This aspect of the program, however, gives choir promotions real meaning and significance, as well as giving the students great satisfaction.

The training is provided in a positive and supportive environment that fosters motivation and a healthy attitude. In addition to developing excellent musicians, the system builds good character in its participants.
RSCM Awards

In order to support the choir trainer and affirm the levels achieved within the choir while working on the Voice for Life training scheme, the RSCM provides a parallel system of awards designed to be assessed through a formal examination: these are called the Bronze, Silver and Gold awards.

Each award has its own syllabus and regulations. These come complete with guidelines to fully prepare the candidate and the choir trainer for the standard expected during the examination.

Successful candidates are entitled to wear a prestigious medal cast in the appropriately colored metal (bronze, silver or gold) and these are worn on distinctive ribbons. Bronze awards are worn with a Green ribbon, Silver awards with a Purple ribbon and the Gold award with a Dark Red ribbon. At First Presbyterian, we put the award onto the corresponding Dark Blue, and Red ribbons already earned by the chorister.

The Voice for Life scheme provides training and preparation for the Bronze, Silver & Gold Awards; Light Blue and Dark Blue help a candidate prepare for their Bronze Award, Red level helps a candidate prepare for the Silver award, and Yellow level helps a candidate prepare for the Gold award.

Likewise, the Bronze, Silver and Gold awards affirm each of the Voice for Life levels that have been awarded informally by the choir trainer.

The Standards System

Check marks are recorded on a chart near the choir rehearsal room so that students can easily see their own progress.

**Three Checks** are reserved as a distinction for attendance, punctual arrival and excellent work. Basic musician and deportment skills must be habitual and energized so that constant reminders from the Choirmaster are not necessary.

**Two Checks** represent attendance and punctual arrival. Two checks can also be earned for attendance and excellent work, *if* the late arrival or early departure is excused. An excused late arrival or early departure should be communicated, in writing, a week in advance.

**One Check** represents attendance.

- Beginners must earn a minimum of 60 standards to be promoted to the next level.
- Choristers must earn a minimum of 200 standards to be promoted to the next level of achievement.
- Special recognition is given to singers who achieve the highest number of standards.
Teaching Resources

The teaching resources of the Choir School are culled from a variety of traditions and are continually adapted for greater relevance. The major resources are:

The Royal School of Church Music Training Scheme - Voice for Life
This system emphasizes Christian deportment, social skills, group leadership, and musical terminology.

5 Wheels to Successful Sight Singing by John Bertalot

The Singer’s Manual of English Diction by Madeleine Marshall
Madeleine Marshall taught and coached singers in English diction at the Juilliard School of Music, the Union Theological Seminary, and the Metropolitan Opera. The Choir School incorporates her principles of diction to achieve a blend and balance in choral tone.

Presbyterian Book of Common Worship
In the course of their work, the choristers become familiar with scriptural stories and traditions celebrated in the liturgical calendar. Choristers are expected to understand their role and the role of others in the liturgy.

Vestments and Music
Vestments serve as a visual symbol that the Choir, which includes children, teenagers, and adults, functions as one voice, leading the congregation in worship and offering praise to God. In addition, the combination of vestments and ribbons, which are earned by choristers as they progress through the Chorister Training Program, serve as incentives and remind us that each choir member is commissioned with responsibilities of musical leadership.

While wearing vestments, everyone in the choir needs to refrain from eating any food and drinking any beverage except water. Stewardship of our fine vestments is everyone’s responsibility. Each member of the Choir (Choristers to Adults) is assigned a number that identifies his or her music, hymnal, folder, cubby, and vestment. Great care must be given to all of these items, since each singer usually has between $40 to $60 worth of music in his or her folder and is responsible for vestments worth several hundred dollars. Please contact the Choirmaster after a rehearsal if anything is amiss.

Choristers should wash their hands after PYE dinner before rehearsal to ensure that sticky and greasy food does not get on music or into the sanctuary balcony.
**Dress Code**

**COLOGNE AND PERFUME**
Cologne and perfume should never be used in services or concerts, since some singers may have a reaction to the scent and have difficulty breathing. The use of cologne and perfume during rehearsals is discouraged for the same reason.

**SUNDAY DRESS**
On Sunday mornings and at all special events, men and boys may wear light colored shirts with ties, dress trousers or khakis, and dark shoes. Hair should be nicely kept.

Women may wear skirts, dresses, or slacks with dark, “closed-toe” shoes.

Please do not wear jeans, sneakers, or sandals, and avoid turtlenecks as they protrude above the cassocks. Jewelry, if worn, should not focus undue attention upon the individual and necklaces should not be worn over the cassock or cotta. Hair bows, if worn, should be white and not elaborate.

**CHEWING GUM AND CANDY**
Chewing gum and all types of candy are prohibited at any rehearsal or service.

**Safe Church**
First Presbyterian Church has a robust attitude toward preventing and responding to any incidence of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse or misconduct, exploitation, exposure to pornography, bullying, or harassment. All Employees and Child/Youth Volunteers follow clear policies for safely interacting with and supervising children.
Weekly Rehearsal Schedule

Sundays

Choristers, Teens & Adults  9:30-10:15 a.m.
Vesting  10:15 a.m.
Worship  10:30 a.m.

Tuesdays

Beginners  4:00-4:55 p.m.
Choristers  5:00-6:15 p.m.
Teens  6:15-7:15 p.m.

Thursdays

PYE  3:30-6:30 p.m.*
Beginners & Choristers Sing  3:45-4:25 p.m.
Christian Education  4:30-5:10 p.m.
Beginners & Choristers Ring  5:15-6:00 p.m.
PYE dinner  6:00-6:30 p.m.
Choristers, Teens & Adults  6:30-7:15 p.m.
Teens & Adults  7:15-8:30 p.m.

* Beginners (grades 2-3) meet 3:30-6:30 p.m.
* Choristers (grades 3-8) meet 3:30-7:15 p.m.

A complete schedule of rehearsals, Sunday morning services, special services, and concerts for all of the music programs of the church is published at the beginning of each semester. The monthly schedule is also published in the church’s newsletter, First Reports.

Choir School Plan B Option

“Plan B” is designed for those who are not able to commit to the full Sunday morning responsibility of our Choir. Plan B members participate in specified Sundays, and in all special events. Plan B members are invited to contribute financially to the running of the church and the music program.

Weekday Parking

During weekdays, parking is available in the church parking lot on the corner of Second and Mulberry Streets. Free parking is also available on surrounding streets (Second Street, Mulberry Street, Chandler Avenue, etc.).
Sunday Parking

On Sundays, the church’s parking lot is set aside for visitors. Please use the former Welborn Hospital parking lot six, which is located on Mulberry Street between Third and Fourth Streets with the entrance on Fourth Street. Street parking is also available.

Entering First Presbyterian Church

For Tuesday and Thursday afternoon rehearsals please use the double white doors at the top of the courtyard. The Choir Rehearsal Room, Room 207, is located upstairs (turn left and then right). The office of the Director of Music is Room 206.

For adults after 6:30 p.m. on Thursdays and pick up on Thursday evening, please enter through the green double doors into the sanctuary at the bottom of the courtyard. The lobby doors are locked around 6:30 p.m.

Safety Guidelines for the Choristers

Parents are urged to walk their children to the door and lead them into the building. At the end of the rehearsal, parents are urged once again to meet their children inside the building and walk them back to the car. Please do not drop your children off on the sidewalk and then drive away before they have entered the church building.

For pick up on Tuesdays, parents are invited to wait on the second floor landing, or directly outside the choir room. On Thursdays, parents are invited to enter the sanctuary and wait downstairs. You are requested not to talk while waiting as this can disturb the rehearsal taking place.

The Music Support Committee

A strong support team is essential to the success of a music program, since the life of the choir consists of so many facets beyond weekly practices and services. The responsibilities of the Music Support Committee are varied and the committee members represent varied backgrounds and skills. The Committee meets at least once per month at a regular time, normally at the conclusion of worship at 11:45 a.m. Parents and other supportive individuals serve on this committee as well as choir members.
The Parent/Child Relationship in the Context of Rehearsals and Presentations

The intergenerational aspect of the Choir School provides a unique and rewarding opportunity for several members of any given family to participate together in a choral ensemble. In addition to sibling participation, parents and their children can sing and work together, striving for excellence in the choral program.

In the context of rehearsals and presentations, parents and their children need to remember that they report equally to the Choirmaster, just as any other individual choir member would do. Routine requests and discipline are always the responsibility of the Choirmaster and parent/child roles should not be manifested in rehearsals and presentations. Of course, emergency situations that demand parental attention are always respected.

Opportunities for Parents

As parents, your support and encouragement are crucial to the choral program. Please notify the Choirmaster of absences with as much notice as possible (a week in advance in writing or via email is preferred).

In addition to directly supporting one’s own child, parents can become involved in other aspects of the program including car pooling, chaperoning social events and trips, hosting receptions, mailings, committee work, publicity, and dinner activities for PYE.

Parents and visitors and prospective choir families are always welcome to observe any rehearsal. When observing rehearsals, we ask that visitors refrain from talking.

Recruitment

Recruitment is a year-round process that involves everyone in the Choir and Choir School; i.e. choir members (Beginners, Choristers, Teen Singers, and Adults), choir members’ families, and Choir School supporters. Each person needs to take responsibility in asking friends, associates, and acquaintances if they enjoy singing and if they would be interested in learning more about the choir program at First Presbyterian Church.

Our special service/concert series and summer music camp also serve as a means of recruitment in addition to offering our community a unique and meaningful outreach. Consequently, every singer needs to make his or her participation in the special events and summer music camp a priority.

When inviting prospective members as guests to the Choir, please give the Choirmaster advance notice when possible. In the rehearsal context, guests can be invited to participate in Choir. In a performance context, however, a guest should only observe the Choir.
Summer Schedule and activities

GATHERING (Come and Sing!) CHOIR

The Choir of First Presbyterian Church does not have regular weekday rehearsals during the summer. However, members of the Choir are encouraged but not required to participate in the Gathering Choir which presents anthems for the 10:30 a.m. worship service on specified Sundays. This ensemble has a forty-five minute rehearsal beginning at 9:30 a.m. In addition to providing music for worship, the intention of the Gathering Choir is to encourage singers who are not ordinarily members of the choir to experience singing in church on one rehearsal.

THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF CHURCH MUSIC SUMMER COURSES

Since we are affiliated with the Royal School of Church Music, everyone is encouraged to participate in one of the Royal School of Church Music summer courses which are held in numerous locations throughout the United States. Each course is conducted by internationally renowned musicians and offers choristers an opportunity to sing the finest of sacred repertoire in a large group with the highest standards of musical performance. Choristers enjoy meeting their peers from around the country and return to their own churches energized and even more devoted to singing. Furthermore, these courses assist in developing each chorister’s potential which in turn strengthens the home choir. A full complement of structured recreational and social activities is supervised by dedicated and experienced support staffs. Information concerning the RSCM summer camps is available in the spring.

Since 1997 Robert has been a member of the music staff of the RSCM America King’s College Course. Held in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, each summer, the King’s Course is the largest of its type in the United States, numbering around 200 singers and staff. During the school year, the Choir School engages in fundraising activities to help defray the cost of sending choristers to RSCM courses.

MONTREAT

The Presbyterian Church has in Montreat, North Carolina a remarkable resource in a beautiful location. Each year, for two consecutive weeks in June, Montreat is home to 2500 visitors for the Worship and Music Conferences. The two weeks are identical and offer remarkable opportunities to musicians, directors and pastors of all ages. If you are unable to attend an RSCM summer course, the church also has scholarships available to attend Montreat.