



**Skidaway Island United Methodist Church
Chancel Choir Handbook
2013-2014**

Funerals: The loss of a loved one is a hard reality of life. Music can often make this time a little easier. Traditionally, the Chancel Choir sings at the funerals of its members. However, there are times when the family of a non-choir member may request our presence at the funeral. Members that are available are asked to oblige in these cases. Not only does it provide comfort for the family, but it is also a great representation of our congregation's love for one another.

Miscellaneous

Solos: It is important to showcase the talents of our members and to allow them to offer those talents to God in worship. However, those who sing solos should set an example by their dedication to this ministry. Please be aware that, if you attend irregularly, you may not be asked to sing a solo. It is SIUMC policy that we do not pay church members for the use of their talents.

Seating: From time to time, the director may move singers around to achieve a better sound/blend or to make sure that our seating arrangement is visually appealing. Please be a good sport and oblige. The director may also request that choir members move from one section to another in order to place singers where they may be the most successful or to best meet the needs of the ensemble for a specific piece. Do not leave spaces between yourself and other singers in worship or rehearsal. It affects your ability to blend, as well as our planning for adequate seating in the choir loft.

Atmosphere: It is often said that the devil enters the church by way of the choir loft. It is easy to degrade the pastor, the director, other choir members, church members, guests, and current situations. This type of behavior will not be tolerated in this ministry! If you have a complaint or suggestion about ANYTHING, speak to the director (in a kind manner) rather than participating in idle gossip. Members should always demonstrate Christian character.

Office Hours: Choir members are encouraged to come to the director with any concerns they may have. However, due to various rehearsals and meetings that occur throughout the week, members are encouraged to call beforehand or to make an appointment. Please understand that if you just show up, the director may be unavailable to meet with you. In addition to the normally scheduled services and rehearsals, the Director of Music & Worship is in the office from 9:30 am until 4:00 pm, Monday through Thursday. Friday is his day off.

Rehearsal CDs: Each season the director makes a CD of current/future anthems. Members are encouraged to use these as a way to reinforce what we learn in rehearsal. They are also an excellent way to get a head start on upcoming music.

Foreword

This handbook has been prepared as a reference for members of the Skidaway Island United Methodist Church Chancel Choir, to ensure that all members are well informed about the purpose of our Music Ministry, our policies and procedures, and shared expectations for choir membership. All choir members should familiarize themselves with this handbook and its contents.

This edition of the handbook has been streamlined to eliminate material that is subject to frequent change. The choir's weekly newsletter will provide information about upcoming anthems, events, special practices, and member information. Our choir room bulletin board will provide important information, and our resource rack will have hard copies of materials of interest to our members. Our membership directory will be updated quarterly and paper copies will be available in the choir room.

Mission Statement

The Music Ministry of Skidaway Island United Methodist Church exists for the sole purpose of glorifying God through music and worship. In keeping with the foundations of Methodism, we seek to "move on towards perfection" in our lives and in the musical offerings we bring our Creator. The ministry strives to provide a place for individuals to share their God-given talents while being encouraged through fellowship with other believers. We hope to draw ourselves and others closer to God by invoking His spirit to move through our music, and touch the hearts and lives of His people.

Musician's Prayer

Glorious God, source of joy and righteousness, enable us as redeemed and forgiven children evermore to rejoice in singing your praises. Grant that what we sing with our lips we may believe in our hearts, and what we believe in our hearts we may practice in our lives; so that being doers of the Word and not hearers only, we may receive everlasting life through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Scripture

"Give glory unto the Lord, and declare His praise in the islands." - Isaiah 42:12

Motto

*"Soli Deo Gloria"
To God alone be the glory*

General Information

Membership: The Chancel Choir is our Music Ministry's premier ensemble. The choir is known for its strong sense of musical excellence and its dedication to the spirit of worship. Membership is open to anyone high school age and up who feels called to serve the Lord through music. All that is required of you is a desire to praise God, commitment of your time, and an open heart. There is no audition for this ensemble. However, persons wishing to join may be asked to sing for the director so that they may be placed in the appropriate section. Choir members are not required to be members of SIUMC, but they are asked to be in constant prayer for the choir and its ministry. New members are welcome at any time; however, the start of the fall or spring season is the best time to join. New choir members are asked to fill out a Membership Information Form. Copies are available in the choir room.

Attendance: No ministry of the church can function without the full support of its members. Members are encouraged to make this ministry a priority in their lives. Choir members who are not able to be in worship on a given Sunday should still attend choir rehearsal the previous Wednesday evening. We rehearse music several weeks in advance. However, if you have not attended rehearsals in a while, you are asked to prayerfully consider if you are prepared to sing on a Sunday. Choir members who are well enough to be in church are well enough to be in their place of service. Simply "filling your chair" is a testament to others. Family members and friends visiting worship will understand, and be inspired by, one's faithfulness to the choir.

Inactive Members: Members who are absent for long periods of time will be placed on an inactive roll. Members on the inactive roll may have their robes and folders reassigned as needed. When an inactive member is once again able to participate, a new robe and folder will be assigned. This does not apply to our members who are away for the summer.

Number System: Each choir member is given a number upon joining the choir. Members are also given a corresponding robe, folder, and music slot. Choir members are also given a heavy duty file folder. Feel free to keep music that will not be used in worship in this folder. Please keep your area as clean as possible. Do not leave unnecessary or valuable items in your music slot or folder. These areas may be cleaned out often and at random.

Nametags: Each choir member receives a nametag upon joining the choir. With a group as large as ours, it is helpful to be reminded of each other's names. Please wear your nametag to each rehearsal. If you do not have one, or need a new one, please see one of the music librarians. Members who prefer to wear their plastic church name tag may do so.

Duties: For a ministry to be effective, the responsibilities must be shared by all. This will ensure that necessary tasks are completed, and that members feel like a vital part of the group. We currently have volunteers who coordinate birthday celebrations, send get well cards, take up money for choir events, work with the Children's Choir, handle publicity, serve as assistant conductors, and file music. Members are asked to take their jobs seriously and to find a replacement when they are unable to fulfill their duties. If you would like to volunteer for a task, please let the director know.

Music Committee: This Committee is a non-governing body that aids in the various aspects of the Music Ministry. Its role is to help and support the Director of Music & Worship and his vision of ministry. Members serve a two year term and are expected to be good role models by their attitude and attendance. Please let the director know if you would like to be considered.

Calendar

Sign In/Out: A NEW calendar has been created containing all Music Ministry rehearsals and performances. Choir members are asked to use this tool to plan their absences accordingly. Please inform the director via email of any conflicts that you may have. This will help us to plan our music accordingly. If your plans change, please let the director know. Attendance is taken at all rehearsals and worship services in order to help us keep up with our members who are gone unexpectedly, due to illness or other circumstances.

Summer Choir: The Chancel Choir does not rehearse on Wednesdays during the months of June, July, and August. Instead, we rehearse one hour before worship and prepare only the music for that Sunday's service. This is a great opportunity for people who want to try the choir for a short time with no commitment. It is also perfect for college students and visiting family and friends who are in town for the weekend. The music for the Summer Choir is easier than our normal repertoire and is chosen to accommodate weekly variations in choir size and section balance.

Retreat: Each year the Music Ministry holds a fall retreat. It is an opportunity for us to refresh after the summer and get a head start on music for the fall. Please try your best to make this each year. It is deeply rewarding.

Parties: Throughout the year, the choir takes time away from its busy schedule to relax and fellowship. This is most often done around special holidays. These events are important team-building experiences, and all members are strongly urged to attend. If you would be interested in hosting a get-together, please let the director know.

Turning to the Cross: For the *Gloria Patri* and *Doxology*, the choir stands and turns to face the cross, turning toward the middle of each row and lifting our face to the cross. This is to symbolize the true focus of our worship. Feel free to sing the *Gloria Patri* and *Doxology* in unison or in parts.

Communion: Our church celebrates the sacrament of Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month. The choir is always the first to receive communion because we often times will sing during the sacrament. Please be as brief at the rail as possible. Also, try your best to remain in order so as to not create a traffic jam when returning to the loft. Once you return to the loft, please remain standing until the director seats you.

Postlude: Normally the choir does not recess on the closing hymn. Instead, all choir members remain in the loft until the conclusion of the service. Following musical etiquette, the choir traditionally remains seated for the organ postlude. Members are asked to remain quiet until the postlude is finished. Please refrain from cleaning out your notebooks during this time. Please do not applaud.

Member Responsibilities

Robes: Choir members are responsible for the cleaning of their own robes. The robes may be taken home and washed, but the cassocks and cottas must be washed separately! Please make sure that your robe is hung properly after worship. Also, refrain from putting pins and/or other accessories on the outside of your robe. Report any problems with robes to the robe captain or librarian.

Apparel: At special times throughout the year the choir may be asked to wear other apparel. This may include, but is not limited to, formal (tuxedo and black dress) for Christmas and all black for Good Friday. Please note that choir members are asked to purchase a Music Ministry polo shirt. The cost is \$25.00.

Mail/Email: Please check your music slot for things or communications the director might leave for you. The director also corresponds with the choir via email. Members are encouraged to check their email for important information about the choir. Please keep the church and the Music Ministry informed of any changes in addresses and/or contact information, and watch the choir newsletter for updates on new members. (Member Information Forms, and up-to-date choir rosters are available in the choir room.)

Choir Fund: From September through May, a basket is passed each week at rehearsal. Choir members are asked to give a dollar a week to the choir fund. This money is used to help send flowers and cards to sick and bereaved choir members. If you choose to pay the year's total by check, please write "Choir Fund" in the memo line to assist our Controller.

Wednesday Night Rehearsals

Rehearsals: Rehearsals are held on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 pm during the fall, winter, and spring, and last until 8:30 pm. Please be on time and stay for the entire rehearsal. If you arrive late, please enter discreetly. Rehearsals may be extended and/or added from time to time in order to prepare for special programs. Please refrain from talking or asking unnecessary questions during rehearsal. If you have a suggestion, or a problem, please address it in a one-on-one setting after the rehearsal. You will be extended the same courtesy. Members are discouraged from bringing children into the choir room. A nursery is available for all rehearsals. Please, no cell phones in rehearsal!

Devotions: As choir members, it is our responsibility to aid the congregation in reaching new spiritual heights through worship. However, this means that choir members may not always receive the spiritual nurturing that they deserve. This is why devotions are an important part of our rehearsals. They help us to focus our hearts and our minds and make our work more meaningful. Members are also encouraged to participate in the Music Ministry Sunday School Class.

Newsletter: Each week the Music Ministry publishes a newsletter. The newsletter includes a devotion, information on upcoming events, important reminders, monthly birthdays, prayer concerns, and a little humor. Please take time to read this each week in order to stay current with what is going on in the life of the choir. A PDF of the newsletter is posted on SIUMC's website for those who are not able to make rehearsal. If you would like to include an announcement or a prayer concern, please email all submissions to the director by noon on Wednesdays.

Music

Anthems: Anthems for each rehearsal will be placed in the numbered slot above your choir robe. Please arrive at rehearsal in enough time to make sure that you have all of the music to be rehearsed, and it is in the order listed on the whiteboard. If you find during rehearsal that you do not have a piece of music, please do not disrupt the rehearsal to find it. Share with your neighbor, and then see a librarian after the rehearsal. Members are encouraged to mark instructions from the director in the music with pencil. Because the music is numbered, you will always receive the same copy as long as you sing with the choir. Members are encouraged to work on their music at home, and they are responsible for bringing music back to the church.

Responses: Each week the choir sings an introit, a prayer response, and a benediction. Responses will usually remain the same for an entire month or liturgical season. Note that other responses may be added from time to time.

Service Music: To avoid the cumbersome use of hymnals, the choir uses photocopies of introits, hymns, affirmations, responsive readings, and benedictions from our hymnal. Each week, the service music, along with the church bulletin and/or newsletter, will be laid in service order on the counter at the front of the choir room. Please pick up a copy of each.

Benediction: “The Lord Bless You and Keep You” by Peter Lutkin is a favorite benediction of the Chancel Choir. It is sung often in worship throughout the year and at the conclusion of all rehearsals. This benediction may also be sung as a farewell to choir members who are leaving. Dwight L. Moody once stated: “Here is a benediction that can be given all the time without being impoverished. Every heart may utter it, every letter may conclude with it, every day may begin with it, and every night may be sanctified by it. Here is blessing—keeping—shining—the uplifting upon our poor life of all heaven’s glad morning. It is the Lord Himself who gives us this bar of music from heaven’s infinite anthem.” The SIUMC choir normally sings this benediction from memory. Copies of the sheet music are available in the choir room.

Old Music: When you return to the choir room after the Sunday service, please return ALL of that morning’s music to the appropriate pile. Please keep your responses unless told otherwise. If you cannot physically return to the choir room, please have a friend return your music for you. Members who leave for long periods of time are asked to clean out their folders before they go.

Sunday Morning Rehearsals and Worship

Rehearsal: The choir sings weekly at the 10:00 am worship service. Warm-ups, often led by fellow choir members, begin an hour prior to the service. Rehearsals begin when the director arrives from the first service. Please be on time so that you may robed and ready before rehearsal begins. This will help us to be fully prepared for worship.

Valuables: You may want to leave all valuables at home on Sunday mornings due to the fact that personal belongings should not be taken into the choir loft. However, valuables may be locked in the choir room during the service.

Procession: The choir gathers in the breezeway prior to the worship service in an order similar to our seating arrangement in the choir room. The group is split in half to form two lines for the procession. As the prelude begins, the choir moves into place in the narthex for the introit, standing in a two-line arc formation behind the table and facing the open doors. (It is best to stay in the processional order as much as possible.) After singing the introit, the choir processes in pairs down the center aisle when the congregation starts singing. Choir members begin singing the hymn as they pass through the open doors.

Procession Continued: Please do not talk in the narthex. It creates noise that is distracting to worshipers. Please consider using the prelude time for personal prayer and meditation. If you are a liturgist, soloist, instrumentalist, or will be ringing in the bell choir, please position yourself on the end of a row. If physical limitations prevent you from processing, you may go to the chancel before the service begins and step into your place in the procession as it passes.

Loft Behavior: In order to maintain a worshipful atmosphere, please remember to be as discreet as possible once you enter the loft, and do not move around or leave unless it is absolutely necessary. NO TALKING IN THE CHOIR LOFT! Please smile and look pleasant. Remember, it is our responsibility to lead the congregation in worship, not to be a distraction.

- No strong perfumes or colognes!
- Do not rattle candy wrappers!
- Please refrain from wearing big and/or loud jewelry.
- Hold all music in your black folders. Do not hold loose-leaf music.
- When processing in from the chancel doors, please keep your folder in the hand away from the congregation.

Hymn Singing: In keeping with the tradition of Wesley, the singing of hymns is of great importance. Be aware that the organist may do things in order to keep the hymns interesting. This may include the use of introductions, harmonizations, interludes, and descants. It is highly recommended that you use the congregational hymns as a way to practice good choral technique, blending, and sight-reading.

The standard format for congregational hymn singing is as follows:

- First Stanza: Unison
- Middle Stanzas and Refrains: Parts
- Last Stanza: Unison
- Amen: Sung at the end of the first hymn in unison or parts.

The processional hymn is to be sung in unison by all choir members until they reach their place in the choir loft, at which time the standard format for congregational singing applies.

For subsequent hymns in the service, to avoid confusion, please stand when the organist starts playing the introduction.

Recessional hymns, when used, are to be sung in unison by choir members. Please stop singing as you pass through the doors to the narthex.