

BUILDING CHOIR CHURCH

A Guide for Parishes,
Cathedrals and Dioceses



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SINGING. SACRAMENT. SOCIAL JUSTICE

Welcome

We are delighted that you are exploring Choir Church. This guide will help you prayerfully to discern, understand, and think about Choir Church in your own context with others in your parish, school, cathedral, diocese, and wider community.

Choir Church is a model for new worshipping communities, built around children's choirs in schools, led in partnership with local churches. Choir Church seeks to unlock the missional potential of high-quality music for evangelism in our schools.

Choir Church unites worship, musical excellence, and spiritual formation and is designed to build and grow congregations which work for social justice. While it is principally school-based, Choir Church worship is open to the wider community of parents, teachers, neighbours and friends.

Our vision is to show and tell the good news of Jesus Christ by

- Deepening our **life of prayer** through active discipleship
- Growing and **planting congregations**, in which new people encounter Jesus
- **Organising for justice**: being a church which is of and for the poorest

The Choir Church Foundation

The Choir Church Foundation (Charity 1193985) supports Parishes, Schools, Cathedrals and Dioceses in establishing Choir Church in their own context. We offer resources, a learning community, and events for all participating parishes, for a modest annual subscription of £250. Additional support is available on a consultancy basis including help with recruitment, fundraising, project design, musical delivery, and training for clergy, staff and volunteers.

The name 'Choir Church' is Trademarked with the UK Intellectual Property Office, and 'Choir Church' and its logo may be used by permission of the Foundation, for which a Memorandum of Understanding will be agreed.

The Trustees include The Reverend Prebendary Richard Springer (Chair), Father Angus Ritchie, Canon Dr Paula Gooder, and Mr Nigel Bamping (Secretary). The Consultant is Mr Tom Daggett.

www.choirchurch.com
@ChoirChurch

Missional Theory

Choir Church is a model of church planting in a mixed-ecology church. It has seen children and their families come to faith in the churches and schools where it has been planted, and has nurtured the faith of members of parish congregations. Choir Church puts children and their families at the centre of church growth.

Building new, mid-week congregations around children and their families in school is liberating. It refreshes approaches to Eucharistic teaching and worship, and connects what takes place on a Sunday morning in parish churches with what takes place every day in the life of local schools.

Music and Evangelism

Music is one of the most powerful tools we have for evangelism. When children sing, they are at one with their 'truest' selves, and the truth and beauty of God's love is revealed to them. Music deepens children's spiritual, moral, and social awareness, and the Holy Spirit is at work in this process. When beautiful music is combined with the truth of the Gospel, there is fertile ground for faith to emerge, grow, and deepen. When adults experience children singing, they too are moved, and it can be the case that children evangelise their parents.

The English Choral Tradition

The English Choral Tradition has quietly and persistently nurtured faith in this way for centuries. The work of skilled composers has revealed God's truth and beauty, and this living tradition provides a wealth of material which can help us to build congregations and evangelize for generations to come.

When choristers regularly experience this truth and beauty, manifest in church music which is grounded in the liturgy, they are left with lifelong spiritual tools. Many adults who enjoyed singing as children then encourage their own children to sing in choirs. This ecology at the heart of the English Choral Tradition can powerfully be brought into schools and communities as a tool for mission, evangelism and social justice.

When children connect what they see in their communities, with what they sing, with how they pray, and with how they act in their communities, faith is both nurtured and deepened. This careful work is the imperative of Choir Church.

“There are many who have come to faith through what we call a ‘Damascus road experience’ – and they can tell you exactly where and when it occurred: at a parish mission, or an evangelical rally, or at a World Youth Day event, or perhaps quietly in church, or whilst reading the Scriptures. And yet others of us have grown up in the faith from our earliest years. And though there have been moments of revelation, moments of understanding, moments of grace, we haven’t experienced the Pauline moment of conversion. But both routes to faith are equally valid. But it doesn’t stop there. Conversion – turning to Christ – is an ongoing process; for the Lord who calls us, and who has a work for us (a Definite Work, as Blessed John Henry Newman called it) will be continually offering us the means to fulfil that work.”

The Reverend Canon Christopher Tuckwell

Sermon at Choral Vespers at Westminster Cathedral for the Feast of the Conversion of Paul, 2017

CONCEPT

Choir Church plants new congregations in schools which meet to sing, share in the Sacraments, and work for social justice.

Choir Church exists in partnership between clergy, musicians, teachers, parents and children. It is grounded in the school community, providing a ready context for faith formation.

Choir Church creatively and proudly uses the music of the church to grow disciples. Whole-school collective worship, classroom singing, and after-school choirs fuel this faith formation, and this culminates in Eucharistic worship in school.

Choir Church gives children and their families an appetite for social justice with a heart for those on the margins, thus creating a church which is of and for the poorest. This means building relationships with other local organisations (which may be different faith-based organisations such as Mosques, Synagogues or Temples) in order to work for change for the common good. This might include feeding those who are homeless, welcoming those who are marginalised, improving local facilities for those in need, or making our streets safer.

CHOIR CHURCH HAS FOUR ELEMENTS

1. Local School

Choir Church builds a new congregation around a children's choir based in a school, which may or may not be a church school.

2. Sacramental Worship

A children's choir sings in a Eucharist which is open to all – parents, teachers, and neighbours, including a 'planting team' of existing worshippers.

3. Choral Excellence

Children learn a wide range of liturgical music, which is sung in worship, equipping them with lifelong skills.

4. Social Justice

The congregation is built and developed using the practices of community organising, so it can work with its neighbours to act on Jesus' command to challenge injustice.



EVANGELISM HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis that the Christian choral tradition is a powerful tool for evangelism among children and their families, is based on the following.

Planting New Local Congregations

Research suggests that as many as 40% of new Christians come to faith through new congregations. By starting congregations outside of Sunday, parishes can be more experimental in their approach, they can avoid the competition between Sunday worship and sport, and they can tailor their evangelistic approach more tightly to their cultural context.

Building the triangle between Church, School and Home

Our Dioceses have an extraordinary family of church schools and many Head Teachers are practising Christians. There are strong links between church and school in many parishes with clergy leading worship and serving as governors. However, parishes often struggle to exploit these close relationships to reach out into families. Choir Church addresses this by providing worship for families with children taking a lead, and thus seeks to complete the three-way link between church, school and home.

Celebrating the Eucharist as a Converting Ordinance

Eucharistic congregations in the central and Catholic traditions have often struggled with church planting and have not often adapted Eucharistic worship to be directly evangelistic. However, historically the Eucharist has been a

key tool of mission and a direct way in which people have met Jesus in word and sacrament. Wesley described it as a 'converting ordinance.' Choir Church will give the tools to celebrate the Eucharist in a way that intentionally makes new disciples and so offer this greatest of gifts to a new generation.

Music as a Missional Tool

The revival of the Church of England in the nineteenth century was led by parishes inspired by the Oxford movement who used choral music as a tool of mission. Its beauty moved hearts to heaven and its words taught the faith and this approach was used with particular success in working-class parishes. Still today, there are countless examples, especially in our cathedrals, where music has been the route to faith. Choir Church will use the Anglican choral tradition, taught to a high standard, as a way to help children and their families find faith in Jesus Christ, the object of all our praise.

Social Action as a Means of Mission

It is very important for young people to see the Gospel lived out in practical action. Nietzsche's challenge to the church of his day, 'Show me you're redeemed and I'll believe in your redeemer' still has power in young ears. Choir Churches live out their Eucharistic identity through social action in the local community, and this in itself will have power to evangelise.

**With thanks to The Rt Revd Philip North,
Bishop of Burnley**

METHODOLOGY

How to establish Choir Church in your Parish

Begin your exploration of Choir Church with prayer and discernment alongside those in your parish, school, and wider community.

We encourage you to be audacious about growth, and make Choir Church your own. Further support in church planting can be found through the Gregory Centre for Church Multiplication.

1. Build relationships and gain support

- **Build relationships** around Choir Church. Explore the concept of Choir Church with your church wardens, your local head teacher, teachers and governors. Many of the curriculum requirements for music and religious education can be met through the teaching of Choir Church, and community links can be made between the school and myriad other organisations.

Build a Planting Community comprising the clergy, musician(s), a representative teacher (e.g. Deputy Head or music or RE curriculum leader), Choir Church Wardens, and a small team of volunteers from your Sunday congregation.

Meet with the Choir Church

Foundation and ask for any additional help or support you may need.

2. Resource Choir Church

- **Identify a funding source** over a number of years. This may be a dual conversation between church and school, and may also involve the Bishop and the Diocese. Locally, this may include smaller charities, foundations, and businesses.
- **Recruit a professional choral leader** to work in school and build a choir. Expert delivery is needed (the quality of teaching required for an average Year 2 class is just

as demanding as leading a cathedral choir rehearsal). This will include leading 30-minute classroom singing each week for each year group, whole-school collective worship, an after-school choir, leading worship in school and occasionally on a Sunday morning (when the choir visits the church to sing at a number of points throughout the year).

3. Nurture the culture of singing in your school

- **Establish weekly singing** for each year group, introducing hymns, simple anthems, and giving the children regular opportunities to perform in church and elsewhere. This singing should be led by a qualified musician who is able to enthuse the children and build the musical skills of the school, crucially, introducing musical notation.
- **Create a Choir Club**, which ideally should not clash with other clubs at school during the week. This will begin with a 30-minute rehearsal immediately after school, some interactive teaching led by the priest and/or teachers, and then games in the playground. Refreshments could also be served, in consultation with the school.

4. Incorporate religious teaching into your weekly rehearsals

- **Embed faithful teaching.** Clergy being present in school and regularly supporting the musician in Choir Church is important, so that they can get to know the children, and connect with families at the school gate. Clergy and lay workers can then arrange 121 conversations with families.
- Focus on the Sacraments.** Through faithful participation in the Eucharist, Choir Church will encourage families to explore baptism and confirmation. Child-friendly explanations of the Sacraments will be woven into religious and musical teaching.

5. Meet regularly for worship

- **Meet at least monthly for acts of worship** in school, covering the key Christian festivals and seasons of the liturgical year, with the choir at the centre of the service. You might like to meet for fellowship following the service.
- **Connect with Sunday worship** – the children of Choir Church should be invited to specific acts of worship when the choir is able to sing. This might include 2 Sundays per term, such as key festivals. Families involved in Choir Church may naturally join your Sunday congregation anyway, and children could additionally join your parish choir if you have one.

6. Work for Social Justice

- **Teach children that our faith calls us to care for one another**, particularly those who are most at risk in our communities. Ask what they see that they would like to change, and build prayerful action into the heart of Choir Church worship.
- **Get to know the parents** by scheduling 121 conversations, and ask the ‘why questions’ to understand people’s motivations. Your planting community can be involved in these

conversations, and additional guidance in structuring an intentional 121 conversation is offered by the Choir Church Foundation.

7. Embed Solid Safeguarding Practices

- **Embed solid safeguarding practice** to create a healthy culture where children and families and the wider community are freely able to worship together. This will principally mean agreeing entrance routes, arrival times for adults, having separate toilets for adults/children, and guaranteeing supervision by 2 adults with Enhanced DBS clearance at any given time. It will help if the school can nominate a Teaching Assistant or member of staff who is able to support the weekly Choir Club. The school will be able to advise on its policies in this respect.

8. Connect with us and with others

- **Join our Learning Community.** Connect with and learn from other churches which are planting Choir Church as part of a Learning Community of like-minded clergy and musicians.
- **Visit other Choir Churches** and explore collaborating with other schools and parishes, particularly if they are in your local area.



TOOLS TO HELP YOU BUILD CHOIR CHURCH

The following community organising tools will help you to build relationships and move Choir Church from idea to action.

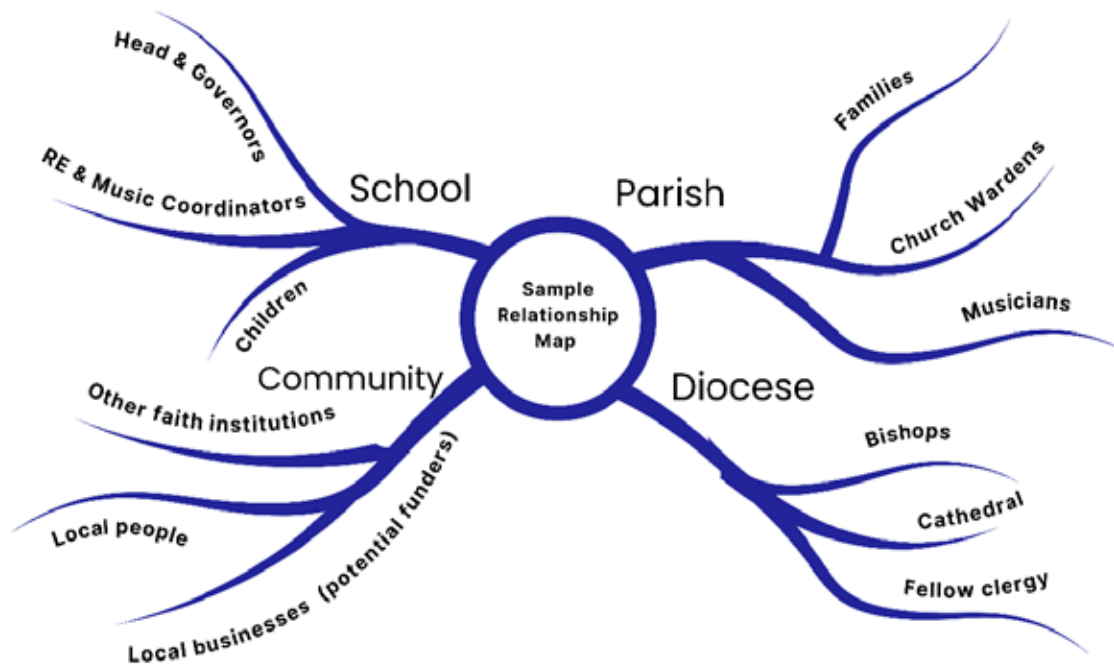
Relationship mapping

- Who has institutional power in your parish, community, or Diocese? What is their self-interest?
- How can you communicate your aims and ambitions in a way which appeals to their self-interest, and wins their support? For a head teacher, this might mean meeting curriculum, Ofsted, and Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools (SIAMS) requirements. For a member of your congregation keen to volunteer, this might mean fulfilling a calling or vocation.
- Which other organisations are within your parish which might help you build the Choir Church congregation? An example would your local Tenants and Residents Association.

- Which other organisations are within your parish which might help you connect with others around local issues, such as housing and street safety? An example would be the local mosque, synagogue or temple.

Relationship building

- Undertake regular 121s with your Choir Church congregation – this includes parents, teachers, and others.
- You can encourage children to have 121s with one another as part of your weekly sessions, particularly if you are exploring certain issues (e.g. homelessness)
- Share 'good news' regularly with parents, partners, and funders
- Encourage members of your planting community to meet at the school gate and get to know parents



Example of a relationship map

Designing a sustainable financial Model

Active fundraising, honest conversations, and ‘can do’ approaches to finance will help you. More information is shared below on finance. We encourage you to consider parish, school, charitable and other local sources and to place fundraising at the heart of community connections to make Choir Church sustainable for the long term. An example might be holding a collection at a community carol service.

Recruiting Christian Musicians

The Choir Church Foundation has sample Job Descriptions to help you advertise. We recommend using the Church Times as well as social media, and writing to local universities, music colleges or other institutions to help spread the word.

Long-term administrative and musical planning

Plan the liturgical year with ambition alongside your musician; design a choral curriculum for the year (e.g. linking to the school’s own curriculum areas and topics), identifying suitable hymns and pieces to be sung to support your worship and teach children about the Lord.

Being upfront about the musical excellence which the English Choral Tradition has to offer, as well as the fact that you’re willing to make a commitment to developing Choir Church over a number of years (rather than as a one-off project, which many schools are suspicious of).



BUILDING CHOIR CHURCH ACROSS YOUR DIOCESE

Choir Church will be an effective means of delivering the vision of the Church of England across your Diocese in the following ways.

1. Prioritising a younger and more diverse church.

Choir Church builds on relationships between parishes and schools in order to proclaim the Gospel most especially amongst children and their families. Through worship, music, prayer, teaching and social action the imaginations of young people will be caught up in the person and teaching of Jesus Christ.

2. Building a church where a mixed ecology is the norm.

Choir Church is one part of a much broader church planting strategy across Dioceses, as parishes are encouraged to explore new ways to reach out with the Gospel.

3. Aligning with your Diocesan vision for growth.

The remit of Choir Church is specifically in growing disciples. Choir Church can work in synergy with and alongside other Diocesan initiatives, including those already reaching into schools.

Resourcing your Diocese with Christian leaders

At a Diocesan level, Choir Church might be structured and staffed as follows:

- A **Choir Church Co-ordinator** employed by the DBF or DBE will be based at the Cathedral, where they will work under the supervision of the Director of Music. Additional mentoring will be offered through the Choir Church Foundation.
- **Professional musicians** will work in schools across the Diocese, overseen by the Co-ordinator and employed either by the PCC or, where PCCs lack capacity, by the DBF. Musicians may work in more than one parish (we recommend up to three). Parishes may already have a capable musician, whose time can be extended to meet the missional remit of Choir Church.
- A **Memorandum of Understanding** will be drawn up with the Choir Church Foundation.

Creating a Diocesan steering group

A steering group will meet regularly to oversee the roll-out of Choir Church in your Diocese. This should involve: Bishop(s), Area Dean(s), representative musician (e.g. cathedral organist), representative head teacher(s), and a representative from the Choir Church Foundation. The steering group will create new connections between parishes and the Mother Church.

BUILDING CHOIR CHURCH WITHIN YOUR CATHEDRAL

Your Cathedral may be at the heart of a Diocesan initiative, or may have a desire to build its own congregation and community reach through Choir Church.

A Cathedral at the heart of Choir Church in its Diocese has the following hallmarks:

Place of worship

- Choir Churches visit their Cathedral to worship, and to hear the Cathedral Choir. There may occasionally be the opportunity to sing alongside the Cathedral Choir.
- The Cathedral may have guided school visits with a religious focus.
- Choir Church Year 6 leavers undertake a pilgrimage to their Cathedral to pray for their transition to secondary school.

Coordinating role

- Clergy and musicians may work with others in the Diocese (e.g. the Board for Schools) to help find partner parishes.
- There may be an employee based at the Cathedral who helps to coordinate Choir Church on a Diocesan level.

Convening space

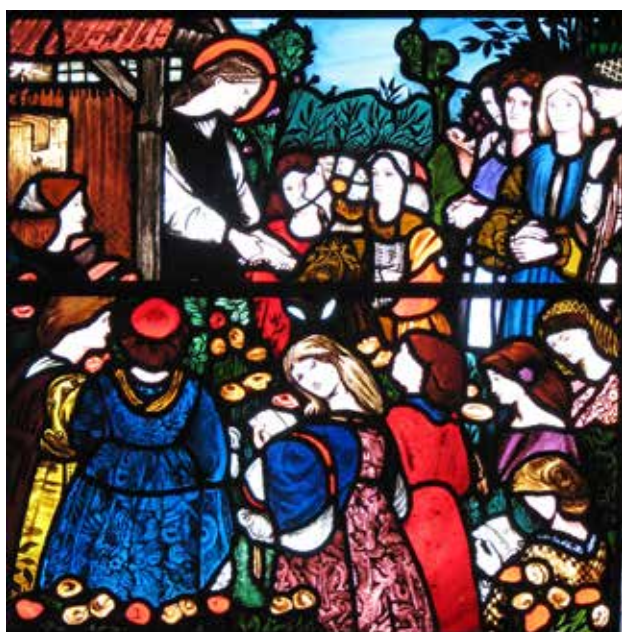
- Clergy and musicians convene for fellowship and shared learning (a Learning Community).
- Children sing at Choir Church festivals, joining other Choir Churches at least once a year.

A centre of musical excellence

- Cathedral musicians make recommendations to affiliated Choir Churches regarding hymns and musical repertoire.
- Musicians may be directly involved in delivering musical provision in a number of schools (e.g. singing assemblies and lunchtime choirs).

Creating pathways

- New musical opportunities may arise for young people engaged in Choir Church, such as Youth Choir membership or encouraging the keenest children who play the piano to take up organ lessons.



CASE STUDY: WORCESTER CATHEDRAL

Worcester Cathedral Voluntary Choir was established in 1874 and has sung weekly at Sunday evening services in Worcester Cathedral ever since. The choir began a new chapter in September 2021, when it became affiliated with Choir Church, the first Choir Church community to be based within a cathedral, as a means of growing discipleship and nurturing the faith of more local families. The Voluntary Choir is now open to boys and girls aged 8 to 13 and continues to sing at the 6.30pm service on Sundays during term-time.

Choir Church has given the Cathedral a new platform for building relationships with local schools, in which Cathedral staff lead lunchtime choirs and singing assemblies.

The choristers meet weekly on Wednesday evenings. In these sessions, led by the choir's director and a member of cathedral clergy, they sing together and rehearse music for upcoming services. They also reflect on the meaning of the texts sung and discuss themes raised in the pieces, alongside asking any questions that may arise. The Wednesday sessions are also an opportunity for the choristers to enjoy each other's company through non-musical activities.

There is a large emphasis placed on community within the Voluntary Choir and the Choir Church congregation. Pre-service refreshments are provided each Sunday. The choristers, their families and other members of the congregation gather at the back of the cathedral to socialise together, in the company of the cathedral clergy, music and pastoral staff, before the service begins.

Most of the weekly services follow a bespoke Evening Worship format, containing two hymns and two anthems sung by the choir, alongside said responses, readings, prayers and a talk. Twice each term there is a Eucharist, and there are opportunities for other special services at major festivals with a Diocesan focus. Examples include the annual county farmers' harvest service and the Worcester Christmas Fayre. On Palm Sunday and Easter Day, Choir Church services deliver the Holy Week and Easter narrative through anthems, hymns, readings and prayers.

Nicholas Freestone, Assistant Director of Music, Worcester Cathedral

“We know that children can be the best evangelists of their own families. Music can bring the children to church, and modelled correctly and honestly, the parents and families may follow.”

David Price, Director of Music, Portsmouth Cathedral



CASE STUDY: THE DIOCESE OF BLACKBURN

The Diocese of Blackburn has embarked on the first Diocesan pilot of Choir Church, planting up to 24 new congregations in schools in a largely Anglo-Catholic context, in areas representing both rural and urban poverty.

Dr Rebekah Okpoti was recruited in September 2022 as the Choir Church Coordinator, based in Blackburn Cathedral and managed by the Director of Music. The Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocesan Board of Finance are partners, alongside the Choir Church Foundation and the Church Commissioners who have committed seed funding to test the hypothesis that the English Choral Tradition, grounded in sacramental worship is a powerful evangelistic tool in a church planting context. The Coordinator recruits and manages a team of musicians, who deliver weekly teaching in partner schools as part of a planting community. Aspiration is at the heart of Choir Church in the Diocese, and once a year, all children participating in Choir Church make a pilgrimage to the Cathedral for a Choir Church Festival, broadening cultural and spiritual horizons, and deepening a sense of belonging in the Cathedral as mother church.

Bishop Philip North said:

“We are so grateful to the national church for this funding. I came to faith through the choral tradition myself and it is wonderful news that a new generation will be able to benefit from the many ways that music lifts the human soul.”



Inspiring Children and Young People.

Through Vision 2026, the Diocese of Blackburn is pursuing a step change in work with children and young people. This is a strategic priority under Vision 2026 with a target of encouraging established and new opportunities for young people to come together in community and experience faith and a sense of belonging.

The Diocese of Blackburn has a strong and thriving family of church schools. There are 190 in total with 95% of head teachers being practising Christians. This means that school leaders are committed to the wider mission of the church and that there are strong partnerships between churches and schools. These relationships provide a basis for the current project, which is encouraging parishes to be confident about the potential for renewal and church growth among children and families.

One of the themes that emerges strongly from Choir Church is the importance of confidence: confidence in singing; confidence in themselves and confidence in their faith. The theme of confidence is one that can be seen in the theology and writings of Paul the apostle. For Paul, confidence is something that is a marker of a faith-filled life. In places like 2 Corinthians 3.4 and 3.12 Paul speaks passionately of the way in which faith in Christ bring confidence or boldness and how this confidence can be traced back to Jesus Christ. It is a confidence that is not to be found in personal ability but in the transformation that is found through the death and resurrection of Jesus. It is therefore important and resonant to notice the theme of confidence emerging in the work of Choir Church as a category that encourages reflection on the nature of faith in Jesus Christ.



Dr Paula Gooder, Trustee

MUSICAL APPROACHES AND PEDAGOGY

Choir Church will embed healthy, happy singing in your local school.

The Choir Church Foundation has resources to assist with musical planning across the liturgical year, in order to give support to your musician, and to ensure that children have access to musically and spiritually fulfilling music. This might helpfully be thought of as a ‘choral curriculum’, which you can help to shape in conversation with your school.

The choral curriculum is part of a musical pyramid of progression, with the music of our great cathedral choirs at the pinnacle. Realistically, the music lower down that pyramid ranges from action songs for Year 1 to simple hymns for Year 2. As children become older (from Year 2 upwards), simple anthems, introducing parts, and broadening children’s listening and performance experience help them on the road to a lifelong love of singing, which is deeply connected to their emerging faith.

The following framework might be helpful in thinking about who can deliver the musical teaching in your Choir Church.

Happy Excellence

Set the bar as high as is manageable to give children a high-quality musical education. Happy communities sing well and make great music together.

Case Study: Candlemas Eucharist

Opening Hymn	When candles are lighted on Candlemas Day (Lourdes)
Mass Setting	Matthew Martin, Oratory Mass
Offertory hymn	Lead, kindly light (Sandon)
Communion Motet	Nunc Dimittis, Stanford in C
Closing Hymn	The race that long in darkness pined (Dundee)

Progressive Vocal Training

Every session should begin with helpful, healthy vocal warm-ups. Cathedral musicians are expert at training children to sing. We believe that the same approaches to training can be shared with schools, and your Cathedral musicians might offer advice.

Musical Notation

Children should learn to sing using musical notation. Children learn to read graphs in maths; giving children the full information for a piece of music is little different, and they connect naturally what they sing and hear with what they see. Using musical notation is the most efficient way to teach music in the long term, and is a skill which the church should share with all children (especially in schools with very little instrumental take-up).

Broad Repertoire

Children should be given music spanning hundreds of years in a range of styles. Children are deeply connected to their true selves when they sing. For some children, this deep connection will come from a piece of Mozart or Britten; for others it will be a warm-up with actions, a folk song or a spiritual.

CHOIR CHURCH & SCHOOL MUSIC

#1 Classroom singing for each year
- at least 30 minutes a week

#2 Whole School Singing Assemblies
with the Gospel at the heart

#3 Weekly after-school choir,
led by Planting Community

#4 Commitment to quality, ambition,
and breadth of musical repertoire

#5 Direct link between in-school
music and after-school worship

PLANNING LITURGICAL MUSIC AND TEACHING

The liturgical calendar provides ample opportunities to teach children about the rhythm of the church year.

It may be helpful to theme Masses to reflect your ministry priorities (e.g. family, community, home, social justice).

In time, the children will become used to singing the Ordinary of the Mass, allowing you to introduce more varied hymns and anthems. Keeping this simple and building up the school's repertoire slowly is important. It is a good idea to repeat music every few months as this building takes place.



Music is one of God's greatest gifts to us. It is no surprise that when young people are given the opportunity to sing they usually respond positively and often with great enthusiasm. Having been involved with the original Choir Church in Shadwell for 5 years I have seen the many benefits that the children have received from having the opportunity to sing regularly and I have witnessed the joy that can be seen as they perform sometimes very challenging music. Choir Church opens the door to worship for children who often would never experience it and that can lead to questioning and exploration of faith. Choir Church also enables churches to engage with families and friends who come to hear the children sing. I have no hesitation in recommending churches to explore how Choir Church could be part of their outreach and social engagement.

Nigel Bamping, Secretary to the Trustees, The Choir Church Foundation

WHERE TO LOOK FOR SUPPORT

The Choir Church Foundation can offer support with suggested themes for teaching and repertoire. This is available for free for all parishes which have subscribed.

The Royal School of Church Music has a range of musical resources to assist you. Hymnpact!® is a subscription-based resource for primary schools and churches, providing hymns which are appealing to children and adults alike. The hymns are suitable for use in school (in worship and curriculum settings) but are also appropriate for church congregations of all ages. Its aim is to bridge the gap between the hymns and songs commonly sung in schools and the range of hymns sung in church.

Hymnpact! is a digital resource and is designed to work in various ways.

Lyric Videos: The videos have full orchestration, played and sung by professional musicians, included as standard. They have been designed to meet SEND requirements. Choose between performance and instrumental versions.

Tracks: Like the videos, you can choose between performance and instrumental versions. You might want to use tracks where a hymn has been learnt from memory for example, or use of the videos is not possible.

PowerPoints: The PowerPoint slides are perfect if you have musicians playing and just want to provide the words. They are not automated, giving you full control.

Sheet Music: If your organisation does have access to musicians, our hymns can be accompanied on a piano, on the organ, by a guitar and even with a small group of instrumentalists. They can be sung with just the melody, or with a descant and even with a choir. There are multiple versions of the scores which accommodate all of these options. The sheet music is available to download and we recommend using apps such as forScore (IOS) or Orpheus (Android). Both these apps provide great functionality and are used and trusted by musicians all over the world.

Taken from the Royal School of Church Music Website

iSingPop is a Collective Worship resource for schools, with backing tracks and fun songs which teach children about the Lord.

CASE STUDY

Tom Daggett explores how Choir Church has transformed the music-making in St Paul's CE Primary School, Whitechapel.

No regular singing had existed for five years in this otherwise lively and diverse school. When the concept of Choir Church emerged, the senior leaders were incredibly keen. The quality of singing in school was poor. Children had a limited repertoire and did not know how to access their full vocal range, and there were limited connections with the parish church, despite representation on the school's governing body.

Having established Choir Church in 2017, classes in Key Stage 2 now sing three anthems per half term, alongside a large range of hymns in the Catholic tradition, which connect to their learning in RE and music curricula.

Hosting a Choral Eucharist after school in the hall on Wednesdays has helped parents actively engage in the Christian faith for the first time. We have had baptisms of parents and children in many local families, and children have continued to sing and attend church into secondary school.

Our greatest advocates of Choir Church have often been Muslim children, who describe 'loving the music', 'enjoying learning about what Christians do', and 'appreciate singing in church'. All are welcome in Choir Church.

The English Choral Tradition has opened a world of opportunity and enrichment for our children, who have sung in St Paul's Cathedral, Christ Church, Oxford, King's College Cambridge and beyond.

Hearts, minds, and voices have been opened to Jesus through this process. This has particularly been seen in our leavers who have returned to be part of the wider church community at St George-in-the-East. One 13 year old gave testimony at his Baptism, about how singing hymns had led to his faith in Jesus.

Reflections

- Happy Excellence nurtures children's wider spiritual, cultural and social development
- Many schools have seen a steady decline in quality and provision in their musical delivery and are open to creative approaches.
- All schools are required to deliver the Music Curriculum, and there is a significant degree of creative flexibility. Schools can meet their curriculum requirements through the professional partnership offered by Choir Church.

Tom Daggett combines excellent choral training with faith formation and social justice, and supports schools and churches in inner-city contexts. He established the Hackney Children's Choir and is a founding partner of Choir Church.

Tom Daggett, Choral Director & Consultant, The Choir Church Foundation

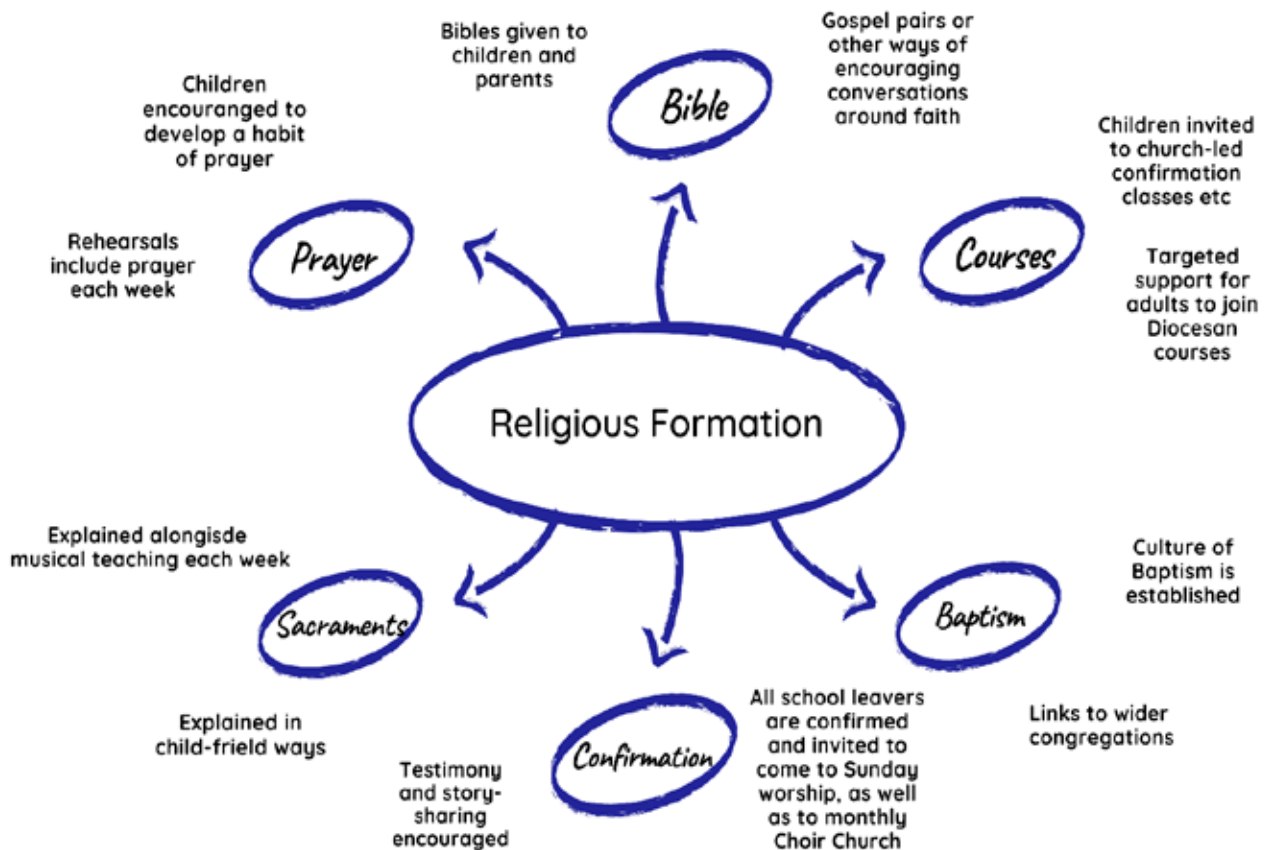


BUILDING RELIGIOUS FORMATION INTO CHOIR CHURCH

Faith formation is integral to Choir Church.

Parish Clergy, supported by the Planting Team, will develop children's understanding of religious and liturgical concepts through weekly teaching,

to encourage a lifelong knowledge of and relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This should be grounded in reading the Bible, prayer, focussing on the Sacraments, and welcoming those on the margins. Your Choir Church could use other ministry resources such as Alpha.



WORKING FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Churches have a vital role to play in the transformation of their communities and of wider society.

Through community organising, prayer and theological reflection, social justice can become embedded in your Choir Church. The following practices will help your Choir Church to be grounded in social action, modelling a church which is of and for the poorest.

Working with institutions

Community Organising builds public relationships between those involved in institutions - for instance, churches, mosques, synagogues, temples, schools, universities and others. This is grounded in the theory that by working together, institutions amplify their ability to act for the common good.

Embedding a culture of regular 121s

Building healthy, active relationships across the community is key to Choir Church, and will help to ensure your congregation is rooted and grounded in the hearts of local people.

Regular 121s with parents, teachers, children, and those in the wider community will help to unpack people's motivations by putting the 'why' questions at the centre of relationship building.

“Going out to meet the risen, wounded Christ in our poorest communities allows us to recover our missionary vigour, for it is here that the Church was born, in the margins of the Cross. If the Church disowns the poor, she ceases to be the Church of Jesus; she falls back on the old temptation to become a moral or intellectual elite.”

Pope Francis, Video Message in the International Conference 'A Politics Rooted in the People', 15th April 2021

Developing Leaders

Community Organising has the potential to nurture the passions, gifts, and aspirations of people who would not normally see themselves as leaders or as active citizens who are able to make change.

Taking action on local issues

Choir Church will help your church to respond to the concerns of those in its community and congregation.

Using institutional power to effect change

Action will be taken to deliver local change - examples include improving provisions for the homeless, supporting refugees, or making our streets cleaner and safer.

Developing a prayerful habit for action

Children and their families will connect what they see in their lives with how they pray, and how they act.



CASE STUDY

Fr Angus Ritchie explores how Community Organising has deepened faith and community at St George-in-the-East

Having worked in East End churches involved in Community Organising since 1998, Angus now serves at St George-in-the-East. His latest book is called 'Inclusive Populism'.

Community organising has been at the heart of Choir Church in Shadwell from the start. The social action campaigns led by St George-in-the-East have been shaped by the testimony of children and families on the impact of rising housing costs and poor repairs on their health.

Homilies at Choir Church have helped children, parents, carers and teachers to understand why and how following Jesus Christ involves praying and acting for justice - and the community organising approach is intentional about developing the agency and confidence of children and adults alike in this prayer and action.

Practical examples have been the children's choir recording a video message to a key decision-maker in Transport for London, and members of the choir giving testimony on their experience of sub-standard housing at a meeting with the Mayor of Tower Hamlets. The video and the meeting were key parts of a successful campaign to secure land for 35 to 40 affordable homes on land near the school and church which had previously been earmarked by Transport for London for luxury flats.

Other campaigns Choir Church members have been involved in have persuaded the Government to include Iceland supermarkets in the Free School Meals voucher scheme during the pandemic, and have improved the lighting in a local park where many families felt unsafe.

The impact of these campaigns has been the deepening of both children and adult's engagement in church life, precisely because they have experienced the link between faith and daily life – and the power of social action rooted in prayer. A number of children who came back to regular worship through Choir Church are now key leaders in St George's developing ministry with and for teenagers.

Learning

- Community Organising has helped to connect what children see in their wider lives with what they sing, and with how they act
- 121s have been a key way of connecting with families of other faiths and none in the school
- Homilies are a powerful vehicle for conveying themes of justice
- Developing a habit for action has taken a number of years, but has proven effective

Find out more about Community Organising at www.theology-centre.org

HALLMARKS OF A ‘COMMUNITY ORGANISED’ CHURCH

The Centre for Theology and Community grew out of east London churches’ engagement in community organising – the practice of listening to God and neighbour, and of acting together for justice.

The Centre has a vision grow the church in areas of economic and religious diversity, fostering trust across denominations and faiths. It promotes the belief that Christianity requires social justice as well as personal transformation. The Centre commits to working with people, not just for them – by working through and building up local churches, rooting this action in listening to God and neighbour.

This vision is achieved by:

- Developing congregations and leaders in deprived and diverse contexts through the practices of community organising, rooted in prayer and theological reflection
- Developing a range of innovative projects which use the practices of community organising to equip churches to transform their neighbourhoods, and which help churches use their resources more effectively for this mission
- Undertaking research that will support the Church in its mission and share the lessons through publications, networking and training

The Centre has identified seven key hallmarks of church-based community organising. CTC supports churches to develop in all seven areas; when they do, they are more faithful and effective witnesses to the Gospel.

Strand 1: Faithful and Effective Ministry

1. The church integrates theology, spirituality and action
2. The church has a relational culture

Strand 2: Planned and sustainable leadership

3. The church is constantly reorganising, to renew its focus on people.
4. Leaders are being developed through public action – and the pace is sustainable
5. Power and responsibility are shared

Strand 3: Engaged with the wider community

6. The church has an instinctive readiness to work with those beyond its walls
7. The congregation tells and embodies the Christian story

The Centre for Theology and Community has been at the heart of the growth of Choir Church, and is an ongoing partner in the development of the vision for this ministry.

FINANCE

Choir Church is a core mission activity which draws on the support of a number of partners. Financial sustainability should be established from the outset.

There are a range of sources which might be approached to help you meet the sample budget below. These include:

- **Pupil Premium funding** – Choir Church provides a day’s musical teaching in school, helping children to meet music and RE curriculum requirements
- **Charitable foundations** – research local funders and consider whether your parish has any connections with trustees. Arrange a meeting and explain the concept of Choir Church and ask for help.
- **Local business support** – ask local businesses to sponsor Choir Church or elements of its work, such as enrichment trips or a community meal. Some schools receive free food provisions from businesses, which could be used for fellowship following services.
- **Community bodies** – local Rotary Clubs are among one of many examples of community-based charitable bodies which can offer support for work in schools.

Cost Area	Cost
1 Musician 0.2FTE	£7,000
2 Mission expenses	£1,000
3 Enrichment	£1,000
4 Music purchases	£500
5 Choir Church Foundation Subscription	£250
	£9,750

Notes

1. £35k pro rata. Payment via invoice. **If PAYE, add on costs of 15%**
2. Community engagement, fellowship after services, general clergy expenses
3. Trips to Cathedral, away days, community building
4. Music will need to be purchased rather than photocopied
5. This is an annual subscription

NEXT STEPS

We would like to encourage you to embrace positive risk in building a team around Choir Church. As you pray and discern, please be in touch with the Choir Church Foundation.

Details of how to meet with us are available on our website. If you are approaching Choir Church as an initial enquiry, we will ask you to complete a short online form to tell us about your motivations, parish, school and musical and financial resources. Please tell us what help or support you might need. We will then arrange a free online consultation.

Provided you are able to meet the time and financial commitments required of Choir Church, we will give you our blessing to begin, and once you have paid your parish subscription, you will be able to use our Trademark and refer to yourselves as a 'Choir Church'. If more targeted or sustained help is needed to get you up and running (e.g. meetings with governors, senior leaders, or potential funding partners), we offer a consultancy service.

Your annual subscription will give you access to termly musical suggestions (our 'choral curriculum') and access to a monthly learning community of like-minded parishes.

Thank you for considering Choir Church.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I don't have a church school in my parish. Can I still establish a Choir Church?

Yes. You could reach out to local families and schools, and run a Choir Church in your church or church hall. Start with the children already in your congregation, and encourage them to bring their friends. The choir would meet each week in your church or hall, in the same way as it would in school.

How is Choir Church different to running a junior or children's choir in my church?

Weekly sessions will involve clergy as well as musicians, based in school, and the purpose of each choir is not only to teach children beautiful music, but to provide deliberate building blocks for faith, grounded in the Eucharist, and fuelled by conversations which turn hearts and minds towards loving others, especially those on the margins.

Choir Church deliberately and openly connects what children sing with what they see in their wider lives, and this in turn affects how they and we worship. As a result of this approach, Choir Church worship places the children at the heart of the congregation, which requires a very inclusive teaching style.

My parish school has lots of children from different faiths. How can I establish Choir Church in this context?

All schools have an obligation to undertake Collective Worship, and to meet RE and music curriculum requirements. Children from different faiths and none can belong to Choir Church and sing for services, provided the teaching is open to all, and provided parents give permission for their children to participate. For example, prefacing teaching with 'Christians believe that...' introduces concepts in an inclusive way.

Choir Church Shadwell operates in a school which is predominantly Muslim, and children and their parents have been happy to be associated with Choir Church.

Do we have to subscribe to the 'English Choral Tradition', or could we use other styles of music?

Choir Church could be led using different musical styles (e.g. Gospel), as long as the standard of singing is of the highest quality, and the worship is grounded in the Sacraments. Choral excellence is at the heart of Choir Church, because beautiful music grounded in the Eucharist is a powerful tool for evangelism. More than this, learning to read a range of music spanning a number of centuries has educational and cultural value.

Could Choir Church operate without a professional musician being employed?

Yes, provided there is someone in the church or school community who possesses the skills and has the time and commitment to deliver high-quality weekly teaching on a sustainable basis. The Choir Church ecosystem centres on a healthy and vibrant culture of singing in schools. This requires someone with the professional teaching and musical skills to create a culture of 'happy excellence'. This music teacher may already exist in your school, or it could be your organist or director of music.

Can the school employ the musician rather than the church?

Yes, if you would prefer that. But the musician should be line managed by the Parish Priest, in consultation with the head teacher.

How will the Choir Church Foundation support us?

The foundation exists to provide education, training, and promote religious activities in schools. It is able to give advice and guide you through the process of creating a Choir Church. The foundation also exists to create a learning community of like-minded churches and musicians who are involved in delivering high-quality musical training for the purposes of growing the church.

We are very interested in planting a Choir Church. What are the next steps?

Arrange a zoom consultation with the Choir Church Foundation. We will send you a Memorandum of Understanding, and will be in touch regularly with opportunities to develop your Choir Church. We are particularly seeking to work with churches willing to make this a

mission priority. You will be able to join our learning community and share ideas, concerns, and aspirations with others.

We would like to roll this out on a Diocesan scale. How can we do that?

The Choir Church Foundation is ambitious for the growth of new partnerships. Additional support for larger proposals is available.

Tom Daggett

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**SINGING,
SACRAMENT,
SOCIAL JUSTICE**

www.choirchurch.com