

### ***Dress, Behaviour and Care of Music***

All choristers wear a royal blue **cassock** and a **ruff**, and, once they have passed the Probationary stage, a white **surplice**. Surplices and ruffs should be taken home for washing 3 times a year; before Christmas and Easter, and during the summer holidays. We are grateful if parents can help their sons in robing and caring for their vestments. Hangers are provided with boys' names on them, and it is an additional help if name tapes can be sewn in the vestments (this can be done during choir practice!). Choir robes are extremely expensive – between £65 and £120 per set per chorister. We therefore urge all boys to look after their robes as well as they can. For services, boys should wear **dark shoes** rather than trainers. In summer dark sandals are acceptable. Incidentally, a choir **sweatshirt** is available with the St. Giles' logo; ask for details if you would like one.

Boys should remember that churches are places of peace and reverence, and their **behaviour** around the building and the churchyard should reflect this. They should always be **considerate** to everyone in the area, and not rush about noisily.

Boys are given a **dark blue folder** with their name on for their music. Music is very expensive, and boys should take good care of it, because it has to last a long time. Anthem books, for instance, may cost up to £20 each. Boys are particularly asked to note if any of their music is beginning to look worn, and draw the Choir Director or the Choir Librarian's attention to this so that it can be mended.

### ***Special Events***

Our Patronal Festival is on September 1<sup>st</sup> - St. Giles' Day - and the famous St. Giles' Fair starts on the nearest Monday afterwards. Special music is also sung at Easter and Christmas, and our candlelit service of Nine Lessons and Carols, the Sunday before Christmas Day, is always a high spot. Occasional master classes are arranged for the choir as a whole. From time to time other opportunities arise; boys have been asked to sing solos in Westminster Abbey and in opera productions.

### ***Commitment***

Our main choir practice is on Friday evenings from 7.00pm to 8.30pm, and we sing during **Sunday** Services at 10.30am and 6.30pm. On **Friday** evenings the choir practice runs from 7 pm. At 8 pm the boys are joined by the men for a joint practice until 8.30 pm, and they then leave, while the men continue on their own.

### ***Attendance: Summary***

<i>Practices</i>	Fridays	7 pm – 8.30 pm
	Sundays	10.15 am – 10.25 am
<i>Services</i>	Sundays	10.30 am
		6.30 pm
<i>Extra services</i>	e.g. Weddings	Boys are given good notice of these.

### ***Punctuality***

All the above are **start** times, **not** arrival times. Boys should arrive in good time

for the practice/service, to be ready to **start** at those times. This means 5 minutes before the start of the Friday practice, and by 10.05 and 6.20 for the two Sunday services, in time to get robed, find their music, and, in the case of the morning service, go to the short practice in the Parish Rooms.

### ***Social Life***

From time to time there are choir outings and parties. The boys have gone to hear the Vienna Boys' Choir, and each January they go to the pantomime at the Oxford Playhouse. Summer outings have included a visit to Warwick Castle and river trips.

### ***Pay***

Boys are **paid** monthly according to the stage they have reached in the RSCM Chorister Training Scheme. A bonus is paid if they are in the team that has done best in its **standards** that month. Standards are awarded for **effort** rather than accomplishment, so all boys have a chance to supplement their pay by behaving well and working hard. They are paid £5 for **weddings**.

### ***Entry***

Boys aged between 6 and 12 who enjoy singing can audition for the choir. They are then welcome to try out choir life for a few weeks before committing themselves.

### ***Choir Structure***

The Choir is divided into Junior and Adult sections. When a boy joins the Junior Choir we expect him to stay at least until his voice breaks. Indeed, we warmly encourage boys to remain in the choir while their voices are changing, so that we can help them acquire the new techniques they will need to sing as men in the company of the experienced men who form the Adult section, and we aim to have four or five boys in this position at any one time. Boys who remain in the choir continue to be paid up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

### ***Choir Teams***

For the purposes of awarding Standards, the boys are divided into 4 teams, Palestrina, Byrd, Tallis and Stanford. The Team Leader encourages the boys in his team to do their best, and helps new boys learn the ropes. Absence and bad behaviour let the team down; the Team Leader aims to have his team winning at least one month in four!

### ***Absence***

Choristers are expected to come to all practices and services. Where absence is unavoidable, please make sure your son's name is signed up in the appropriate space in the chart on the choir notice board in the Choir Vestry. If your son is ill,

or an absence is suddenly necessary, please inform the Choir Director (01865 310686, email [cynthia.hall@theology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:cynthia.hall@theology.ox.ac.uk)).

### **Holidays**

These are designed to coincide with school holidays where practicable, although parents will appreciate that attendance at the church's two major festivals, Christmas and Easter, is also expected.

*Half Terms:* There is no choir practice on one Friday (usually the first) of each half term. Those members of the choir who have not gone away for half term sing at the Sunday services, but we recognise that other families will be away at this time, hence the part-holiday.

*Summer:* The choir breaks up at the end of July, and has August off. When they return, boys are paid holiday pay of 50% of what they would have earned had they come to every possible service during August.

*Christmas/Easter:* Up to two Fridays and Sundays *after* these two major festivals are also choir holidays, and holiday pay is also applicable.

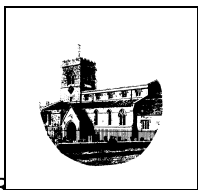
In view of these holiday arrangements, parents are particularly asked to make every effort to ensure that their sons are available for the Christmas and Easter services, and to try to take their own holidays during the choir holidays.

### **Parents**

We very greatly appreciate the help and support our parents give, and we are extremely conscious of their vital role in making sure their boys are available for services and practices. We are always grateful for any help with getting the boys ready for services, and encouraging them in good habits of tidiness over their robes and music.

Parents may sometimes find it helpful to liaise over transport, and to this end are always welcome to ask for the latest version of the choir list.

We also hope that should there ever be any problems parents will feel free to contact the Choir Director and sort them out straight away with her. Please also note that parents are welcome to stay through choir practice at any time, without notice.



## **St. Giles' Church Choir, Oxford**

### **PROSPECTUS**

St. Giles' Church dates back to at least 1120. At that time it was outside Oxford's

city boundaries (then represented by St. Michael at the North Gate), as is normal with churches dedicated to this patron saint of outcasts and beggars.

### **Choir**

St. Giles' is now the only parish church in Oxford to continue the tradition of an **all-male choir**. It thus uniquely gives boys the opportunity to sing a cathedral type of service - and some have gone on to win choral and organ scholarships - while making less heavy demands upon their time than college choirs inevitably do.

### **Benefits**

- Offers free musical education
- Encourages responsibility, concentration and teamwork
- Gives boys the experience of performing on an equal footing with adults
- Introduces them to fine music
- Gives them a new set of friends with a shared, special interest
- Gives them a loved and valued place in the church community
- Provides a useful foundation for a musical career

### **Repertoire**

The choir usually sings two anthems at the Sunday services, selected from a repertoire including works by such composers as Palestrina, Byrd, Tallis, Gibbons, Bach, Scarlatti, Handel, Haydn, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Stanford, Britten, Vaughan Williams and Howells.

### **Training**

We use the Royal School of Church Music's Chorister Training Scheme. All boys start as Probationers. When they have shown a basic competence, they are admitted as full choristers and given their surplice and a medallion on a light blue ribbon. Dark blue (intermediate) and red ribbons (advanced) follow in due course, generally assessed 'on the job', although occasional individual sessions may be arranged. Many boys also pass the Bishop's Award, and outstanding choristers have passed the RSCM's highest examination, the St Nicolas Award, which has a very demanding syllabus requiring advanced choral ability.