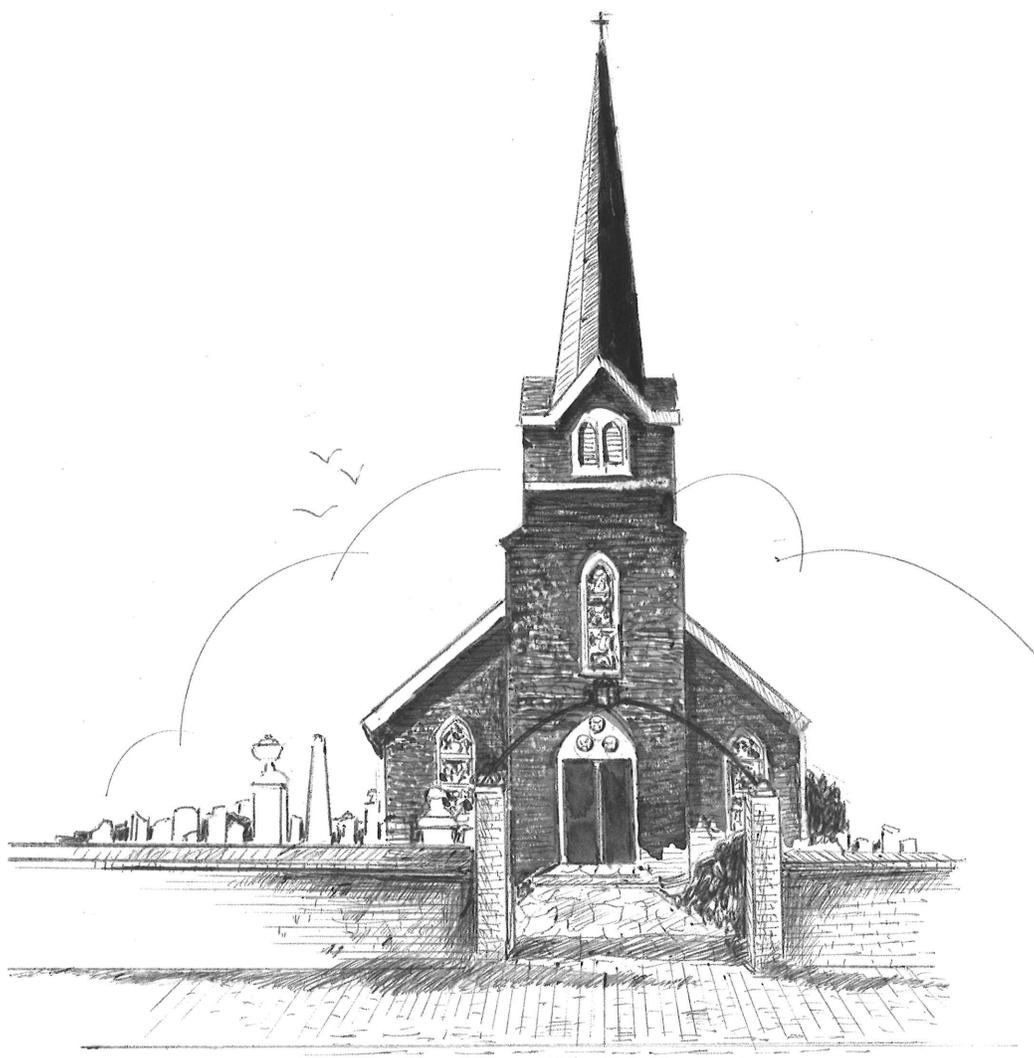


# ST. PETER'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Lewes, Delaware



## Parish Choir Handbook

2018–19

## **Chorister's Prayer**

Bless, O Lord, us Thy servants  
who minister in Thy temple;  
grant that what we sing with our lips  
we may believe in our hearts,  
and what we believe in our hearts  
we may show forth in our lives;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## **Collect for Church Musicians and Artists**

O God, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven: Be ever present with thy servants who seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by thy people on earth; and grant to them even now glimpses of thy beauty, and make them worthy at length to behold it unveiled for evermore; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Gloria Patri**

Glory be to the Father and to the Son,  
and to the Holy Ghost.  
As it was in the beginning,  
is now and ever shall be;  
world without end.  
Amen.

## Table of Contents

Prayers.....	2
Introduction.....	4
Contact Information.....	4
New Members.....	4
Music Calendar.....	4
Communications.....	5
Rehearsals.....	5
Services.....	6
Attendance.....	6–7
Vestments.....	7
Sheet Music.....	7
Outside Practice.....	7
Sung Compline.....	8
Parking.....	8
Inclement Weather.....	8
Social Gatherings.....	8
King’s College RSCMA.....	9
Voice for Life.....	9
Choir Covenant.....	10

## **Introduction**

Welcome to the 2018–19 season of the Parish Choir at St. Peter’s Episcopal Church in Lewes. The goal of this handbook is to provide necessary background information about the choir for both returning and new members. Please keep this book and refer to it as necessary throughout the season.

## **Contact Information**

T.J. Thomas has been Minister of Music at St. Peter’s Church since 2010. He is in the office Sunday through Thursday and may be reached by phoning 302-645-8479 or e-mailing <tthomas@stpeterslewes.org>. T.J. may be reached in urgent situations on his days off, Friday and Saturday, by calling his cell phone, 585-730-3613.

Pat Casadei serves as music librarian and vestment coordinator. Please contact Pat with any concerns in those areas. She may be reached at 302-947-9460 or <nj2del@gmail.com>.

Fr. Jeffrey Ross is the Rector of St. Peter’s Church and is available for pastoral care and other matters concerning the life of the parish. He may be reached at 302-645-8479 or <jross@stpeterslewes.org>.

## **New Members**

The Parish Choir is a volunteer choir comprised of parishioners and friends from the community. New members wishing to join should contact T.J. Thomas to schedule an interview and audition. No previous singing experience is required though the ability to match pitch is needed. Singers should be prepared to commit to the norms and expectations as laid forth in this book. New singers will be welcomed into the choir as openings arise with a mind to keeping the ensemble balanced. Should it become necessary, a wait list of interested singers will be maintained.

## **Music Calendar**

At the end of August each year is published a seasonal music calendar detailing all rehearsals, call times, and services from September to June. A full season calendar is provided up front so that singers may notate their personal calendars accordingly and avoid unnecessary conflicts. Please see the “Attendance” portion of the handbook for expectations and procedures relating to absences.

## Communications

In addition to the annual music calendar, a weekly e-mail entitled *Music Notes* is sent to all singers on Monday or Tuesday. This e-mail contains important reminders as well as any deviations from the published schedule. At the bottom of the e-mail is a list of upcoming repertoire in chronological order and links to listen to the music when available.

Choir members should also be on the parish mailing list to receive the parish newsletter, *St. Peter's Keys*, as well as other periodic mailings. Please contact Ms. Kathleen Albert, Parish Life Director, if you are not already on the mailing list.

## Rehearsals

Parish Choir rehearsals are normally held Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. beginning the week of Labor Day and continuing through May or June depending on the date of Easter that year. Full details are always contained in the music calendar.

Singers are expected to arrive by 6:45 p.m. in the music room to check the whiteboard, gather necessary music, and report upstairs to the church where rehearsal is held. Often psalms and other handouts will be placed on the music stand in front of the piano; please take one copy each. Rehearsal begins with the Choristers' Prayer (found elsewhere in this handbook) when the tower bell strikes 7:00 p.m. Unless notated on the whiteboard in the music room singers are to sit with their voice part.

During rehearsal the director will do his best to speak clearly when giving instructions. Because of the reverberant acoustic of the church, it is difficult to hear when more than one person speaks at a time. For this reason singers are asked not to talk to one another when not singing. Should you have a question, please first wait to see if the director addresses your query without asking. If your question is still unanswered, please raise your hand and wait to be called upon. Singers should avoid abruptly interrupting rehearsal to ask a question.

Rehearsals generally include hymns, psalms, and anthems for the coming Sunday and several weeks thereafter. Anthems are often rehearsed in chronological order. Singers should arrange their scores in this order. A full repertoire list is found in the weekly *Music Notes* e-mail. Rehearsal concludes promptly at 9:00 p.m. by praying the *Gloria patri* (found else where in this book.) After rehearsal the director usually requests singers to move their chair to a designated location so that the church is ready for Sunday morning.

## Services

Singers should arrive 15 minutes before the scheduled call time and report to the music room. Most Sundays call time is 9:15 a.m. and the 8:00 mass will still be in progress: please enter the church via the side red door and proceed down the steps quietly. Similar to Thursday night, singers should check the whiteboard upon arrival and gather necessary materials.

Pre-service rehearsal is held in the church promptly at the designated call time. Singers are vested in black cassock and RSCM medal for rehearsal. At 9:45 singers are dismissed to the music room where they will finish vesting, possibly get a drink of water, use the restroom, and return to the church by 9:55 to lineup for the procession. Silence is kept during the opening voluntary.

Most Sunday morning services at St. Peter's are a Rite II Holy Eucharist according to the Book of Common Prayer. In the Episcopal Church all baptized Christians are welcome to receive communion. Alternatively you may receive a blessing by simply crossing your arms across your chest. Choir members should plan on staying the entire duration of the service, including the final hymn and concluding voluntary. Remember, the choir, as leaders of worship, sets the example for the congregation in these matters. Leaving the service early should only be done in emergency situations.

## Attendance

As previously mentioned, a full season music calendar is provided in late August. Should an occasion arise where a singer must miss a rehearsal or service, **the furthest possible advance notice of absence is required.** E.g. if a singer has a scheduled vacation, the time to notify the director is at the time of booking the vacation, not waiting until the week before departure. This is both a matter of courtesy to the director and other singers as well as a practical one in the event absences necessitate a repertoire change. Advance absences are reported by filling out of yellow absence slip (available in the drawers below choir boxes) or by e-mailing the director.

It is recognized that emergencies and illness may necessitate a last-minute absence from a rehearsal or service. In these instances singers are asked to call or e-mail the director, preferably an hour before the scheduled start time. Please note that these types of absences are reserved for medical illness or family emergencies. Singers are asked to honor their commitment to the choir over last-minute social and entertainment plans that may emerge.

A singer's preparedness to sing a service is at the director's discretion based on rehearsal attendance records. If a singer misses 2 consecutive rehearsals, that singer should not expect to sing the choir's next service. It is the expectation that singers maintain a minimum attendance average of 80%. The director will notify a singer if s/he has fallen below this minimum and discuss the singer's future involvement with the choir.

## **Vestments**

Dressing alike is a visual representation of our cohesive sound and commitment to service in God's name. At St. Peter's the parish choir vest in the traditional Anglican garments of white surplice worn over a black cassock. RSCM medallions are worn over the surplice. If a singer has attained an advanced RSCM level the ribbon color may be other than black. (See RSCM Voice for Life in this book.) Vestments are purchased by the parish for the use of the choir and are to be maintained by singers. Both cassock and surplice are easily machine-washable and should be laundered several times a year. Underneath vestments singers may wear seasonally appropriate street clothes. Singers should avoid jewelry and shoes that call undue attention to our unified vesture. Please avoid perfume or cologne as a courtesy to your fellow singers.

## **Sheet Music**

Choral repertoire is purchased and maintained by the parish for the use of the choir and remains property of the parish. Pat Casadei serves as music librarian and should be singers' first point of contact regarding any sheet music questions. Singers are assigned a black folder that contains all music for a given semester. Each copy of the music is numbered corresponding with the singer's folder number. The large whiteboard in the music room will indicate if a piece of music is to be turned in following that service. Singers are charged with the safe-keeping of their music and are financially responsible for any music that is lost, irreparable, or not turned in on time. Missing music will be notated on the small whiteboard in the music room. Music may be marked in pencil only.

## **Outside Practice**

Repertoire lists, scores, and listening links are all supplied so that singers may familiarize themselves with music outside rehearsal. Singers are encouraged to take folders home and independently review music throughout the week. The more prepared singers arrive at rehearsal, the more effective our time together is and the better the ensemble will sound. Remember: a choir is only as prepared as its least prepared member.

## **Sung Compline**

On the first Thursday of each month, year round, the parish choir chant the office of Compline at 8:45 p.m. in the church. Choir rehearsal concludes slightly early on these nights to allow us to pray the office together. Participation is voluntary though many singers find this a peaceful way to end our time together. Opportunities for solo cantors abound in the office; those interested in cantoring should speak with the director. For Compline the choir vests in cassock and RSCM medal only.

## **Parking**

St. Peter's Church is in the heart of downtown Lewes' beautiful historic district. Parking meters are in effect from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. everyday from May 1 to October 14. On Sunday mornings the meters bordering the church on Second and Market streets are not enforced until 12:00 p.m. Free parking may be had on any of the residential streets bordering the West and South sides of St. Peter's Square. The M&T Bank parking lot at the corner of Market & Third streets may also be available for use outside the bank's opening hours.

## **Inclement Weather**

Fortunately our climate in the mid-Atlantic region is fairly temperate and rarely are scheduled rehearsals or services cancelled due to weather. In the unlikely event a cancellation is necessary the director will apprise singers of the decision as early as possible via e-mail. If there is a question whether or not an event will take place, please first check your e-mail then phone the director if necessary. Singers are trusted to exercise their own good judgment in determining safe travel conditions. If a singer will be absent due to inclement weather the singer should notify the director as outlined above. When snow or ice are present please enter the churchyard on the brick pathways that will have been plowed and/or salted. Avoid using the rear gate in these conditions.

## **Social Gatherings**

A hallmark of the parish choir at St. Peter's is the Christian fellowship we share outside rehearsals and services. Nearly every Thursday from September to May/June a contingent of singers adjourns to one of the restaurants in downtown Lewes for fellowship following rehearsal. All are warmly invited to this gathering. Semi-annually choir members offer their homes for more robust social gatherings often including partners of singers. Details of these opportunities are announced in the weekly *Music Notes* e-mail.

## **King's College Course, RSCMA**

Held annually in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, the last week of July, the King's College Choir Training Course is an opportunity for singers to develop choral singing skills with singers from around the country. It is open to parish choir members in consultation with the director. Scholarships may be available to help defray the cost of attending. For further information please visit <[www.kingscollegecourse.com](http://www.kingscollegecourse.com)>. St. Peter's is an affiliate institution of the Royal School of Church Music in America.

## **Voice for Life**

VFL is a program of the Royal School of Church Music which provides a framework for choral singers to develop vocal skills, musical understanding, and knowledge of repertoire. Singers progress through 5 levels each with a corresponding ribbon color on which is worn the Voice for Life medallion. Awards are also available at the Bronze, Silver, and Gold levels by testing with an examiner who is RSCM-certified. St. Peter's offers periodic classes for singers interested in progressing through the VFL scheme. For further information: <[www.rscmamerica.org/voice-for-life.php](http://www.rscmamerica.org/voice-for-life.php)>.

## **Choir Covenant**

Dating back to the Hebrew scriptures, God made covenants with his chosen people. Covenants are vows of mutually-supportive conditions made in love with the help of the Holy Spirit.

This Choir Covenant is made between the choir member, director, and St. Peter's Church. The choir member and director promise to uphold the norms and expectations as laid forth in this handbook as they "seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by thy people on earth." St. Peter's Church promises to pray for and support the choir member and director in their respective ministries. All constituents agree to speak the truth in love and be gentle with one another if the vows made are broken.

Above all the parties to this covenant promise to uphold one another in prayer as they seek to lead the praises of God's people in this place and in this time.





**St. Peter's Episcopal Church**

P.O. Box 464

Lewes, DE 19985

(302) 645-8469

[www.stpeterslewes.org](http://www.stpeterslewes.org)