

University Church

Visiting Choirs

GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION

Welcome

The University Church is pleased to welcome visiting choirs from parishes, cathedrals, schools, colleges and universities from near and far to help in leading sung worship during the university vacations. We are grateful for the dedication and generosity of visiting choirs in all they contribute to our musical and spiritual life, and for the chance to collaborate together in maintaining the worshipping life of this historical and significant church.

The University Church of St Mary the Virgin stands at the heart of the glorious city of Oxford, with one of its magnificent 'dreaming spires'. A medieval parish church serving the people and visitors of the town, it has also been used for various functions of the University since the earliest college foundations. Its history includes figures such as Thomas Cranmer, John Wesley, John Henry Newman, and John Stainer.

We hope that the guidance and information that follow will help you in planning your visit, and ensuring we can all work to make it an enjoyable and rewarding experience for you.

Available Dates

During University term, Sunday services are sung by the University Church Choir, together with the Director of Music, Robert Howarth, and Organist, James Brown.

For the remaining weeks of the year, visiting choirs are welcome to sing for our Sunday Services of Choral Eucharist (10.30am, Common Worship) and Choral Evensong (3.30pm, Book of Common Prayer). Typically, Sundays are available December to mid-January, mid-March to mid-April, and late June through to September. An up-to-date list of available dates can be found at www.universitychurch.ox.ac.uk/content/visiting-choirs. Choirs of up to 40 singers can be accommodated quite simply, though larger choirs may also be catered for.

In the first instance, please contact the Assistant Priest, the Revd James Crockford, at james.crockford@universitychurch.ox.ac.uk, to discuss potential dates and arrangements.

Liturgical Repertoire

Choral Eucharist

Mass Setting – Gloria (Kyrie in Lent/Advent), Sanctus, Benedictus, Agnus Dei, in Latin or English.

Communion Anthem – no longer than 4 minutes

Four hymns – selected by the Clergy. Tunes are typically from NEH, though words may be modernised or altered on occasion; harmony copies are not available, though melodies are printing in the service sheet.

This service typically lasts one hour, and thus longer settings are not appropriate. The Choir sing from rows of chairs behind the Nave altar. No other parts of the liturgy are sung.

Choral Evensong

(On festival days, a short Introit may be included)

Preces & Responses

Psalm(s) – CW lectionary, BCP/Coverdale texts. The selection of Psalm(s) will be clarified in advance. Choirs are free to determine the choice of chant, and are free to chant with or without accompaniment. If there are multiple psalms, the 'Glory be' is only sung at the end of all the psalms.

Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis – this may be in Latin or English.

Anthem – announced by the officiating minister.

Two hymns – selected by the Clergy. Tunes are typically from NEH, though words may be modernised or altered on occasion; harmony copies are not available, though melodies are printing in the service sheet.

This service typically lasts just over thirty minutes. The Choir sing from stalls in the Chancel. The officiating minister will usually cantor; please supply a copy of the responses for him/her. You will be notified in advance if we need you to provide a cantor.

Accompaniment

The University Church offers a high standard of music, and given the constraints of organ practice time and the instrument's own idiosyncrasies, there is much to recommend the use of our own Organist. Some visiting choirs prefer to bring their own organist. In such cases, please supply their Curriculum Vitae for consideration, and ensure they are acquainted with the Guidelines for Visiting Organists.

The Church is home to a classical organ, built by the Swiss firm Metzler Orgelbau in 1986, one of only two by Metzler in the country. This is a fine solo instrument, with some limitations and challenges when accompanying choral repertoire. We recommend, therefore, the use of unaccompanied repertoire. The Director of Music would be happy to advise in this regard, including on the suitability of choices for organ voluntaries. For further details of the organ, please see the Guidelines for Visiting Organists.

Repertoire Choices

Details of proposed repertoire should be sent **at least two months before your visit**. Given the particular pressures that singing in a new place can bring, we recommend that visiting choirs select repertoire they know to be both manageable and effective; playing to their strengths will make the occasion far more enjoyable and rewarding.

On occasion, choirs may be asked to revise their music choices, if they are deemed unsuitable liturgically, or to avoid repetition.

Your Visit

Safeguarding

The University Church takes very seriously the safeguarding of children and young people. It is essential that all those responsible for your choir's visit are acquainted with, and adhere to, our Safeguarding Policy. As part of booking your visit, we require you to provide us with a copy of your organisation's safeguarding policy, and to provide an adequate number of DBS-cleared chaperones for any young people in your care. All choirs must complete the Safeguarding Form and return it to the Church Office **not later than two weeks before your visit**. Choirs will not be allowed to sing who have not demonstrated satisfactory arrangements are in place in this regard.

Arrangements before the day

Two weeks before your visit, we will send you a completed Visiting Choir Confirmation Form, confirming all details of your visit, together with contact details for choir and church staff on the day. With this, we will supply a final copy of the service sheet.

Access

Please note the High Street allows limited vehicular access (see the Council's guidance [here](#)) and parking is not available on site. For local parking information, including Park and Ride services, please see oxford.gov.uk/carparks. Choirs must liaise with the Council in advance to arrange coach access and drop off/pick up. The church is wheelchair accessible and is equipped with disabled toilets at the rear of the Nave and by the Old Library.

On Arrival

Before the day, we will clarify with you your arrival arrangements. You will be shown access to the Old Library, where belongings may be left, and where the choir should robe, and a member of staff will clarify details for procession, seating, and (if appropriate) communion.

Rehearsals

Unless otherwise arranged, rehearsals on the church floor will be as follows:

10.30am Choral Eucharist	9.15-10.00am Rehearsal
3.30pm Choral Evensong	2.00-3.00pm Rehearsal

Additional rehearsal times are not usually available, but choirs are welcome to present particular requests. Rehearsals should finish promptly to enable congregation members to enter in good time.

The Old Library and Refreshments

Belongings may be left in the Old Library during rehearsals and services. You will be given one access card for the group, so please ensure someone is available to manage access for the group, and in the interests of safety and security ensure the door is kept closed.

Water, squash, tea and coffee, and biscuits will be provided in the Old Library in between the rehearsal and the service. Choirs are not permitted to make use of the kitchen facilities. For Choral Eucharist, the Old Library may be used by the Sunday School during the service, so please ensure the room is kept tidy at all times.

The church is home to the award-winning Vaults and Garden Café, which serves excellent breakfasts, lunches and afternoon teas, together with a range of hot and cold drinks, all of which can be served in the Old Library. If you wish to make further arrangements for catering for your choir, please contact their Events team on 01865 279112 or events@thevaultsandgarden.com.

Dress

The standard dress for the University Church Choir is a surplice, worn over smart clothes. Whilst this is a perfectly acceptable, if unusual, custom, most visiting choirs wear a cassock with surplice. Other forms of robe are allowed, and RSCM medals may be worn by those who have them. Please ensure smart black shoes are worn, and that your choir present a dignified appearance in keeping with an act of reverent worship.

Accommodation

Accommodation may often be found at neighbouring colleges. For more information on availability, please visit <http://conference-oxford.com/bb-self-catering>.

Photography and Recording

Photography during services is not permitted, and we ask for your cooperation and support in ensuring your choir and members of your party understand this. The high altar can provide a beautiful space for an organised choir photograph after the service, as does Radcliffe Square outside the church to the north (in good weather).

Audio or video recording is not permitted within the church building without the express permission of the Vicar.

The Metzler Organ

Specification

I Rückpositiv C–

- 1 Gedact 8'
- 2 Rohrflöte 4'
- 3 Principal 4'
- 4 Nazard $2\frac{2}{3}$ '
- 5 Octave 2'
- 6 Terz $1\frac{3}{5}$ '
- 7 Quint $1\frac{1}{3}$ '
- 8 Scharff 1'
- 9 Dulcian 8'
- Tremulant*

II Hauptwerk C–

- 10 Hölflöte 8'
- 11 Principal 8'
- 12 Spitzflöte 4'
- 13 Octave 4'
- 14 Quinte $2\frac{2}{3}$ '
- 15 Superoctave 2'
- 16 Terz $1\frac{3}{5}$ '
- 17 Mixtur $1\frac{1}{3}$ '
- 18 Cornet V 8'
- 19 Trompete 8'

III Brustwerk C–

- 20 Rohrflöte 8'
- 21 Gedflöte 4'
- 22 Cornet III

Pedal C–

- 23 Subbass 16'
- 24 Bourdon 8'
- 25 Octavbass 8'
- 26 Octave 4'
- 27 Mixtur 2'
- 28 Posaune 16'
- 29 Trompete 8'

Koppeln: I/II, I/P, II/P