

2. Ten years or more of continuous singing in a Diocesan parish choir (doesn't have to be the same choir).

Upon receiving the letter of recommendation from both the parish musician and the rector of the parish, a patch and a certificate of membership will be sent to the choir member. The patch may be worn on the sleeve of the surplice or robe.

Please send all letters of recommendation to:
Brent Miller, Co-Chair, Music Commission
St. John's Episcopal Church
158 West High Street
Somerville, NJ, 08876

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Working with choirs in small churches – the basics of building a choir and community

The following few notes are not comprehensive - they do not fully address the myriad musical issues of working with the small church choir. They are simply a launching place for starting work with a new group, or reviewing your work with a group with whom you have worked for some time. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to contact Walden Moore, Organist and Choirmaster of Trinity Church, New Haven, at walden.moore@aya.yale.edu, or at (203) 776-2616.

Know your own skills first

- ∞ Examine your own experience and vocal knowledge. A good knowledge of basic vocal pedagogy is vital to the success of your choir. If your singers have never had any instruction in this area, you'll be introducing them to the wonders of

proper breathing, vowel production, etc. You'll find that you will learn as much as they do, and they'll enjoy their singing all the more.

- ∞ If you don't have your own vocal experience, get some! Go to a local voice instructor for some pointers – you'll enjoy the experience.
- ∞ Know that your people skills will be as important as your musical skills. Basic psychology is a key ingredient in the team you will build.
- ∞ Ask yourself how patient you can be with those whose skills may be limited, and how creative you feel that you can be with limited resources. Many small churches can only use available vocal resources.
- ∞ Ask yourself how much time you can commit to this endeavor – it always requires a bit more time than you might think.
- ∞ Once you begin working within a service structure, don't be afraid to suggest eventual change, but do so in a thoughtful manner, with some experience behind you. The content of a worship service is a very subjective matter, and it is important to understand who makes the decisions, and how. Educate yourself in this area early on.

Recruitment

- ∞ Identify the needs of your worship service first, and determine what is appropriate to the worship in that community

- ∞ Realistically examine the available vocal resources in the church community. Spend a bit of time with those in the choir before you look for any real changes or additions. Build trust with those with whom you work.
- ∞ If you find, with time, that the resources with which you work are limited (either in numbers or innate talent), determine from your church leaders to what extent they can support the development of the choir. Can you use only immediately available resources, or can you augment those resources from outside the immediate community. It's important to know if you are expected to recruit only volunteers, or if you can augment with "professional" section leaders. Don't have this discussion before you have worked with the already available resources for a while, unless you are hired with the initial understanding that is part of the job for which you are being engaged.
- ∞ Remember that the word "professional" does not first indicate a paid salary – it's a state of mind and being. A volunteer should be encouraged to act "professionally" and, if there are already (or future) paid section leaders in the choir, their professional status must be based on their behavior with the choir as leaders of the sections. The term "paid soloist" should be seen an anathema to the choir – while these folks may indeed sing solos now and then, their real work is to give confidence to the other singers in

their section, and to act as teachers for these folks. If you have any paid section leaders in your choir, have a very clear understanding with them as to this teaching role, and remind them that the choir looks to them as an example in both musicianship and choir citizenship, including prompt attendance at rehearsal.

- ∞ When you recruit for the choir, emphasize the community aspect of the experience, and also let them know that you will expect hard work from the members, which will produce a satisfying result for the service, and a good experience for all singing.

Problem solving

You're working with people in a group, which automatically means you need to be a clear, decisive leader, but be sure that you are known as one who can listen.

- ∞ Choir rehearsals are not community meetings. Members are there for a common goal – musical accomplishment for the service, growth in singing, and joy through singing. Make it politely clear to the choir how you would like for them to ask questions in rehearsal, and when that is appropriate in the rehearsal. Always allow time for questions at some point, even when you are in a hurry to accomplish a great deal. Be sure to always allow for some social time, either at each rehearsal, or on a regular basis at separate times.
- ∞ Make it politely clear that you need to make final decisions on interpretation, repertoire choice, etc.

but be sure that you are listening to the community on how they are reacting to your leadership. Remember to separate the “signal” from the “noise” – the signal being a reaction (positive or negative) from more than a few and the noise being reaction from a few. Don’t ignore a negative reaction from a few, however. Approach them directly, but privately, to see if you can help them solve whatever their issues are.

- ∞ It’s important to remember that you hold a position of some power in your hands, and that you are looked to as an expert. Your reactions, comments, etc. will be viewed more seriously than you can imagine. ALWAYS be positive. Be frank in your criticism, but make sure your criticism is constructive. When possible, address corrections to a section rather than to an individual, unless the problem is severe, which will simply discourage the section. If there is a difference between you and a choir member, NEVER address it in rehearsal, but don’t let it fester. Address it quietly, and soon.

ABOVE ALL, MAKE SURE THAT YOU ENJOY YOUR WORK WITH THE CHOIR, AND BE SURE TO SHOW IT ON A REGULAR BASIS!

Walden Moore, Organist-Choirmaster
Trinity Episcopal Church
New Haven, CT

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What Have We Been Doing?

The Liturgy and Music Commissions have been busy with several projects:

Music and Liturgy – Episcopal Convention, 2005 – Cherry Hill

Music and Liturgy Exhibit Table, Diocese Convention, 2005 Cherry Hill, NJ

Music - Deacon’s Ordination Service, June 11 – Trinity Cathedral

Music Workshop – Equipping the Servants – April 23 – Trinity Cathedral – Dr Jeff Unger and Brent Miller, Presenters

Music – Questionnaire sent to all parishes requesting information about the parish music program. Please send these questionnaires back....**we need them returned.**

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PENTECOST/GENERAL ANTHEM SUGGESTIONS

Pentecost

Spirit Divine – Lovelace – Sacred Music Press S-7426 – SAB – A Cappella

Come Down, O Love Divine – Vaughn-Williams – Abington 241 – SATB – Organ

Come Down, O Love Divine – Harris – Novello 29-0470 – SATB – Organ

Gracious Spirit Dwell With Me – Scott – Augsburg 11-2198 – SA/TB – Organ

General

Alleluia! Sing to Jesus – Harrison –
Morningstar MSM 50-9004 – SATB –
Organ

Adoramus Te Christe – Dubois – GIA – G-
5432 – SATB – Organ

Be Thou My Vision – Chilcott – Oxford BC
43 – SATB – Organ

At The Name of Jesus – Vaughn-Williams –
Oxford 40.100 – SATB – Organ

Awake The Trumpets Lofty Sound – Handel
– Alfred 16297 – SATB – Organ

Be Thou My Vision – Parker – Hinshaw –
HMC-135 – SATB – Organ

Cause Us, O Lord – Nelson – Boosey 5441
– SATB – Organ

Come My Way, My Truth, My Life – Archer
– Mayhew – KM 009 – SAB – Organ

Christ Hath A Garden – Near – HW Gray –
CMR 3271 – SATB – Organ

Come My Way – Rawsthorne – Mayhew – 2-
Part – Organ

Eye Hath Not Seen – Matthews – Shcirmer
10056 – SATB/S – Organ

How Can I Keep From Singing – Busarow –
Coronet 392-42255 – SATB – Organ

How A Firm A Foundation – Rutter –
Hinshaw – HMC 667 – SATB – Organ

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What to do at Pentecost?

We all know what to do at Christmas. The traditions of both church and culture keep us busy decorating, singing, cooking, shopping, and being generally focused on the theme of Incarnation or something close. And there's Jolly Old St. Nicholas. At Easter we have enough to keep us busy as well. And there's, well, the Easter Bunny. But when we come to the third great feast of the Church, we are at a loss. I mentioned several years ago in a sermon that I have never received a Pentecost card. I don't have any traditional Pentecost recipes. Aside from wearing red and the occasional dove image, a tongue or fire here or there; we don't have much to sustain us in making this great feast central to our life. I've seen a number of things attempted. I saw a birthday cake for the church, a big cardboard dove swinging from the ceiling, red of course, even a big red devil piñata on the lawn of a church. Perhaps the message of the feast is that it isn't so easy to pin down Pentecost, partly because we are still living it.

One very popular custom is to have a great collection of readers reading the gospel in as many languages as we can find. Who knew a year of Cantonese 20 years ago in college could come in handy? I wonder if, however, that tradition isn't enacting exactly the opposite of what Pentecost meant. It depends on how we picture it. The text says "And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each." It might be that the miracle of Pentecost was the hearing and not the speaking. Each hear what they could

understand, and as many scholars say, only what they could understand. Certainly to ritualize the varied languages spoken by those present at a gathering makes great sense, but speaking that which no one understands doesn't seem to bring the point of understanding, in fact the key to the story, into light.

So then what do we do? The Prayer Book encourages us to celebrate the Sacrament of Baptism. And if we do, the liturgy begins to speak for itself. Even if no candidate emerges for Baptism, it is helpful for this to be an occasion where Baptismal vows are renewed, particularly at those liturgies where baptisms don't normally happen. If you have a Vigil Mass or an early morning Eucharist, chances are, the times are few and far between that those people renew their baptismal vows. You can quite easily adapt the renewal of vows from the Easter Vigil. For those concerned with adding length to the liturgy, this replaces the Nicene Creed, and if the Confession is omitted, you actually save time!

Another way to highlight Pentecost is to compose Prayers of the People that highlight the meaning. As long as a basic outline is followed, praying for the world, the nation, the church and its leaders, those in need, and the departed; that being covered great allowance can be made for creativity. Focusing petitions on different areas of ministry, or specific needs of different areas of the world, perhaps by continent, may bring the idea of a worldwide church into view in a more helpful way than a cacophony of gospel readings. The Prayer Book provides two collects for Pentecost, so perhaps one could be used before the lessons and the other to conclude the prayers, thus highlighting their complimentary themes. One might also include the Prayer of

Thanksgiving for the Church on page 838 with its wonderful image "We praise and bless you for those whom you have sent in the power of the Spirit to preach the Gospel to all nations. We thank you that in all parts of the world a community of love has been gathered...."

While Pentecost is certainly a commemoration of that wonderful event when the Spirit came, the tongues of fire appeared and the church was commissioned; it is also a celebration of our continuing ministry and mission in the same Spirit. Celebrating some of these ministries might be an effective way of highlighting Pentecost as well. Perhaps having all the acolytes of the parish together carrying candles in the procession, or having members of the food ministry carry symbols of their ministry, or other ways of ritualizing the Gospel imperative of bringing the Truth to all people can bring to life the fact that what began with a burst of wind and the gift of the Spirit continues today with love and great passion in our communities of faith and in our Diocese.

However you choose to bring Pentecost to life in your congregation, remember that on this day, perhaps more than any other day, we are reminded to check our divisions and our conflicts at the door. Maybe we would do well to use Prayer D, the great ecumenical prayer of the church, and pray for the leaders of our sister communions. And in your private prayer on that day, think what it might mean to our Lord if each one of us would remember before the throne of grace someone with whom our bonds of affection are strained right now. For one this one great day we all unite in a common plea, "Come Holy Spirit, Come"

Rev. Douglas Freer, St. James Episcopal Church, Long Branch, NJ. Co-Chair, Liturgy Commission, Episcopal Diocese of NJ.

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AN UNUSUAL OPPORTUNITY

One of the benefits of an early Easter is that the following celebration of Pentecost, coming mid-May, leaves us with “free time” before the usual summer break for choirs. Having a few Sundays in June in the new season of Pentecost offers a rare opportunity to expand the parish’s repertoire of service music—take advantage of it!

First a word about service music. Just as our liturgies are modified, vestments varied, even altar flower policy changed with the seasons of the church year, music is intended to reflect change also. These changes in tone or style are most prominent in the anthems that we select for use at offertory and/or communion. The problem here is that the parishioners are not directly involved with this particular method of change. A liturgical season has a look, feel, thought and sound to it. We need to stimulate every sense every Sunday to reach as many parishioners as possible. I think a change in service music enhances our abilities to further engage parishioners in the understanding and appreciation of the seasons of the church year.

The season of Pentecost is actually the longest season of the liturgical year. It is green time, normal time, so whatever we choose to modify could be with us through November.

Let’s not take on too much too soon. If your choir is off for the summer, you might want

to consider replacing the Gloria with a Trisagion (Holy God, Holy and Mighty, Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon us) which is much shorter and certainly easier for a congregation to sing without choir leadership. Some fine examples in the Hymnal 1982:

S100 from New Plainsong by David Hurd;
S102 after Alexander Archangelsky;
S360 a canon by Richard Fabian.

The Sanctus is also a major musical moment every Sunday, and again, there are many wonderful settings in the Hymnal 1982. My previous parish actually knew seven settings of the Sanctus! Everyone had their favorite, of course, and I attempted to vary the choice as often as possible. But the change was apparent to everyone; they were taking part in the change of seasonal music. It made the new season much more cognizant.

Wonderful examples include:

S114 from Missa de Sancta Maria Magdalena by Healey Willan;
S121 Te Deum Tone, adapted by James McGregor;
S122 Mass 18, adapted by Mason Martens;
S124 from New Plainsong by David Hurd;
S125 from A Community Mass by Richard Proulx;
S127 by Calvin Hampton;
S128 by William Nathias;
S129 by Robert Powell.

Another occasion for change is the Fraction Anthem:

S151 from Missa orbis factor by David Hurd;
S152 Ambrosian chant, adapted by Mason Martens;
S154 from New Plainsong by David Hurd;

S158 from Missa de Sancta Maria
Magdalena by Healey Willan;
S159 from Missa Marialis, adapted by
Charles Douglas;
S161 from New Plainsong by David Hurd;
S167 adapted by Mason Martens;
S170 adapted by Mason Martens;
S171 adapted by Mason Martens;
S172 Ambrosian chant, adapted by Mason
Martens
S374 by Calvin Hampton.

If you have already investigated these
choices I would like to suggest two new
service music settings found in Enriching
Our Music 1. I am particularly impressed
with Peter Crisafulli's Music for the Holy
Eucharist Rite II, which includes a part for
bell choir if you are so inclined, and a
spirited Gospel sounding service titled The
Saint Mary Mass by Carl MaultsBy. This
music really swings!

Other moments in the service that offer
numerous possibilities for change are the
Psalm, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer.
This will be another article!

Teaching new service music takes time--an
issue that will have to be discussed with
your rector. I usually teach portions of new
settings on successive Sunday mornings just
after the prelude, before the opening
sentences, directing the congregation from
the center aisle with the choir surrounding
them. Since we have a clear June this year,
something new could be added to every
parish's repertoire. Let's challenge our
congregants to re-hear some of these sacred
texts by learning new melodies for them.

Dr. Jeffrey Unger

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