

Choir Guide

WHAT IS IT LIKE TO SING IN CHOIR AT THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF GREENSBORO?

(or in texting language “the wiiltsic@uucg guide” ☺)

Revised August 2013 by Mark Freundt-Director of Music;

Joyce Allen and Suzanne Andrews-Choir Shepherds.

Prepared October 2011 by Mark Freundt-Director of Music; Joyce Allen and Suzanne Andrews-Choir Shepherds and Katie Klod-Editor.

*“When we sing, we change ourselves.
When we change ourselves, we change the world.”*

—Mimi Bornstein

Welcome to choir!

Listen! Do you hear Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" celebrating your arrival?

We are excited that you want to add your voice to this singing community! To begin your active involvement, a brief audition/interview will be conducted. It includes a few simple vocal exercises to help determine range and pitch matching skills, as well as, time for sharing previous singing experiences (Thursday Night Karaoke? at the Met with Pavarotti? loudly with car radio? ☺). From this we can decide which part suits you best. Joining choir can happen at any time throughout the year. We invite you to "Come, Come Whoever You Are" because "All God's Creatures Gotta Place In the Choir." (Every moment seems to have a song and these two just arrived.)

While preparing for excellence in worship is hard work (i.e. learning all those notes and rhythms and then remembering to watch Mark for cues), it begins with the understanding that choir is more than a group of people just singing songs. As worship leaders, we serve the congregation by leading them into deeper understanding. Rabbi Abraham Heschel says it best, "First we sing, then we understand." Whether a Bach chorale, an African American spiritual, a Native American chant, a Hebrew melody, a Broadway song, an old classic, a new UU work, a simple round or a complex multi-movement work, we sing in the hope of creating divine, transcendent moments for the congregation and ourselves.

My biggest wish for you is to find lasting joy in being part of this choir. However, it is easy to feel overwhelmed in the beginning with so many pieces, styles, techniques and languages coming at you. Breathe and take things one step at a time. Know that we are a caring church choir with a variety of life stories and skill levels--some read music while others rely on hearing and remembering their part. Joining choir is like jumping aboard a moving train since most pieces were begun weeks earlier. Use your section mates as "the wind beneath your wings" and be reassured that it does get easier with each and every rehearsal. Regardless of this advice, whatever and however you are feeling is important. Please, don't hesitate to share privately with me or Choir Shepherds any concerns.

"A busy choir is a happy choir" is a motto of mine. It is reflected in our schedule and extra projects. This volunteer choir sings most Sundays year around plus Christmas Eve. That is 47 services/year. The only exception is when I am off for Professional Development and personal vacation. The bulk of the choir year runs late August through late May with dedicated rehearsals on Wednesday night from 7:35-9:00pm. The schedule for June, July and August is lighter with only a 1 hour rehearsal on Sunday mornings. General list of extra projects include:

- Traveling to collaborate with other UU choirs (financial assistance available)
- Jazz Nativity "Bending Towards the Light" (annual collaboration with W. Market St. United Methodist Church)
- Christmas Eve service
- Annual Choir Retreat held off and on-site on alternating years (financial assistance available)
- Cabaret Auction Fundraiser for church operating budget.
- Southeast District Choir Festival in Spring
- Hymn Sing Services
- Paul Winter Consort's "Missa Gaia" in late April (Mass setting for community celebration of Earth Day)
- Music Ministry Sunday in late May.

Already waiting to sing with you in the choir loft is an enthusiastic group of music makers with caring hearts, helping hands and lots of joyful laughter. Again, welcome to choir!

Mark Freundt, Director of Music (DOM)
uucgdirmu@bellsouth.net (336.908.1103) cell; (336.288.4873) home

Choir Shepherds

Joyce Allen, tenor oldhaven@juno.com (336.423.4420) cell
Suzanne Andrews, alto sand3420@aol.com (336.491.7527) cell (336.869.6043) home

Choir Shepherds help to facilitate ministry in a variety of ways within the choir by:

- **taking roll** to check in and up on members
- **reaching out** by using cards, emails and visitations
- **listening** to care and logistic issues as liaison between choir and Mark, as director
- **creating** fellowship time (Coda, parties)
- **organizing** logistics of choir retreat
- **administering** scholarships confidentially (Annual Retreat and travel to collaborate with UU choirs)
- **recruiting and nurturing** new choir members
- **noticing and being “feelers”** who monitor overall sense of choir’s disposition
- **monitoring** Mark’s disposition (ministerial care of DOM)
- **keeping up with music** (lugging, distributing, filing, refilling, issuing folders)
- **setting up** of rehearsal and performance space

Joyce and Suzanne meet with Mark monthly to discuss member care issues as well as other concerns that may arise. While we do our best to notice individual issues, please don’t hesitate to seek us out with any question or concern you may have. Our discussions are considered pastoral and as such are held in confidence.

Communication

- **Join choir e-group** to stay informed of scheduling information, as well as, to comfort and support those in need as care issues arise.
 - You may email your request to join to our moderator, Wendell Putney (wputney@gmail.com).
 - Or go to “groups.yahoo.com”, search for “uucgsochoir”, then click on “join this group”.
- **Email or call Mark and/or Choir Shepherds when absent for rehearsal or performance.**
It is helpful for planning purposes and for keeping up with individual care issues.
 - Mark 336.908.1103 uucgdirmu@bellsouth.net
 - Suzanne 336.869.6043 sand3420@aol.com
 - Joyce 336.423.4420 oldhaven@juno.com
- **If bad weather threatens Wednesday night rehearsal**, Mark, as Director of Music, will make and post decision by 5pm to choir e-group. Regardless, do what is safest for your individual situation.
- **If bad weather threatens Sunday morning worship**, the board president will make and post decision by early Sunday morning on UUCG email announcements, sent to UUCG e-newsletter subscribers and will most likely be aired on television’s WFMY Channel 2 under “church delays and closings.” Regardless, do what is safest for your individual situation.

Wednesday Evening Schedule

6:00 – 6:45pm	Potluck dinner is open to all and is optional.
6:45 --7:00pm	Clean up from dinner.
7:00 - 7:25pm	Expressions is a Music Team sponsored service exploring connections between the arts and spirituality—often music, but also poetry, storytelling, dance, etc. and is optional.
7:35 - 9:00pm	Choir rehearsal is in the sanctuary.
9:00 – 10:00ish (once a month)	CODA is choir fellowship time after the first rehearsal of each month. A snack/dessert potluck with various drinks (beer and wine options for those 21+) is created with what members bring to share. (Btw, "coda" is a musical term describing a substantial ending section in a piece of music.)
10:00ish (once a month)	Clean up from monthly CODA includes: wipe down tables, return tables to their table closet, vacuum around tables, reset chairs in preparation for Sunday services, empty trashcans in sanctuary and kitchen, wipe down and reset kitchen leaving it spotless, load and run the dishwasher.

Before Rehearsal

- **Arrive no later than 7:30pm in sanctuary.** You will need a few minutes to settle and prepare.
- **Smile (e.g. ☺) and greet each person you see warmly.** Spreading joy is a spiritual practice.
- **Find your music folder.** It will be in the "choir folder box" on a row of chairs near choir loft, unless borrowed for practice at home. These folders are the property of the church. Please, take care of them. They will remain on loan to you for the duration of your long choir tenure. Choir Shepherds issue them.
- **Find all music listed on dry erase board before warm up begins @ 7:35pm.**
 - Hymnals are in bookcases at entrance to sanctuary.
 - Hymn #'s 1–415 = Singing The Living Tradition (aka STLT or grey hymnal)
 - Hymn #'s 1000–1074 = Singing the Journey (aka STJ or teal hymnal)
 - New music will be laying out on a row of chairs near the choir loft.
 - Other unfamiliar music titles you missed when absent will be in the "current choir music box."
- **Return performed/shared music.** The title(s) are listed at the top of the dry erase board. Correlating file folders will be on a row of chairs near the choir loft. Or simply place any overdue pieces in "miscellaneous music return" folder in "current choir music box."
- **"Good-to-know" info:**
 - Performance dates are listed in parenthesis to the right of each title on dry erase board.
 - The title of the next performance piece is surrounded by a box on dry erase board.
 - Notes to choir are at the bottom of dry erase board.
 - Organizing your music folder alphabetically eases your search for a particular piece.

During Rehearsal

- **Be ready to listen.** With so much music at every rehearsal and to keep things lively Mark tends to go quickly from one instruction to another. Your attention is vitally important.
- **Have a pencil with an eraser in your folder.** With 168 hours between rehearsals it is very helpful to write instructions, reminders and other hints in the music.
- **Put a lid on it.** It is important to hydrate vocal cords by sipping water frequently. However, while you know where you put your drink, your neighbor's big feet might not. This includes coffee, tea, soda, etc.
- **Refrain from unnecessary side conversations.** If after having listened to instructions and still need clarity, then discreetly ask a section mate. You may also discover your answer demonstrated as the rehearsal unfolds. If not, then ask Mark. Another option is to ask after rehearsal.
- **Refrain from being scented.** Even the lightest smelling colognes, perfumes, lotions, deodorants and fabric softeners can irritate airways leading to sinus inflammation, sore throats and headaches.
- **General rehearsal outline** (*subject to change, allowing for flexibility in the moment*)
 - Warm up
 - Gentle stretching to prepare the body and mind for the physical aspects of singing. (BTW it is very, very light yoga. So light in fact, it is "noga." ☺)
 - Singing selected hymns in preparation for upcoming services as a transition from the "work day" to "music making time."
 - Vocal exercises for improving singing techniques including: tone production, breathing, pitch, blend, balance, diction, etc.
 - Connections
 - Massage-train is a brief, yet gentle neck, shoulder and back rub given and received by your neighbors to ease physical tension and connect everyone through touch (optional).
 - Sharing of Joys and Sorrows allows for the deepening of relationships as significant life events are shared.
 - Announcements
 - Rehearsal of listed pieces on dry erase board.
 - Dismissal is given by Mark around 9-ish pm.

After Rehearsal

- **Collect all personal belongings.** This includes cups with lids, mislaid Kleenexes and any trash.
- **Return music folder to "choir folder box."** Actually practicing at home is music to my ears. However, with such busy lives, it might in your best interest not to run the risk of leaving it at home.
- **Return hymnals to bookcases at entrance to sanctuary.** (grey/teal/grey/teal—you'll see.)
- **Offer best wishes to everyone before leaving.** Spreading joy is a spiritual practice.

Sunday Morning Schedule

- 9:30am – 10:30am** **Religious Education** for children and youth is in the RE wing.
Religious Education for adults is in the sanctuary.
- 10:30am -10:50ish** **Warm-up** for choir is held in "Ralph Waldo Emerson" room
(aka room 6/7 in Religious Education wing).
- 10:55am-12:00ish** **Worship Service** is in the sanctuary.
Religious Education for children and youth begins in the sanctuary,
and then moves to RE wing.

Before Warm-up

- **Gently vocalize in the car.** The voice is rather “froggy” in the morning and our warm-up time is simply not long enough. Try quietly humming long tones, recalling soft warm-ups from past rehearsals or gently singing along with the oldies on the radio. (NPR doesn’t count. ☺)
- **Arrive no later than 10:25am in "Ralph Waldo Emerson" room.** (aka room 6/7 in Religious Education wing). You will need a few minutes to settle and prepare.
- **Smile (e.g. ☺) and greet each person you see warmly.** Spreading joy is a spiritual practice.
- **Find your folder and your music.** All will be to the right as you enter.
 - Folder will be in “choir folder box.”
 - A few extra copies of that morning’s music will be on the counter.
 - Both grey and teal hymnals will also be on the counter.
 - Orders of Service will be on the counter.
- **Find your standing place in your section.** Take a breath and prepare to sing from the heart.

During Warm-up

- **Standing is expected.** The room size is not big enough for all the chairs needed. Our warm-up and run-through time is only 20 minutes. Remember that you do sing better when standing. However, those with physical challenges may be seated. Just let Mark and/or Choir Shepherds know.
- **Preparing for worship service.** All pertinent choral music for the service including hymns, musical offerings and choral preludes will be refreshed and polished with last minute focus suggestions.

Transition from Warm-up to Worship Service

- **Reset room as we move to the sanctuary.** Use the diagram posted.
 - Restack chairs.
 - Return piano and bench to inside wall placement.
 - Help Choir Shepherds move folders, music and leftover hymnals.
- **Collect all personal belongings.** This includes cups with lids, mislaid Kleenexes and any trash.
- **Be in your choir loft by 10:55am.** Your worship leader transformation begins with helping to lead “Gathering Songs.” (Remember it takes a few minutes to weave through people in the lobby (narthex).

During Worship Service

Focus on creating meaningful worship for yourself and the congregation by:

- **modeling quiet, reverential behavior.** The congregation notices all actions and reactions like whispering, burying your face in the music, having a sourpuss face while singing; etc.
- **singing “through your eyes.”** This is to project and convey intent and meaning of music.
- **looking up often.** Watching Mark is vital to the cohesiveness of the ensemble.
- **catching a congregant’s eye.** This is to make connections within the sanctuary.
- **singing service music in parts.** Copies of “Spirit of Life” and “Shalom Havayreem” can be found in “current choir music” box.
- **having choral music at the ready.** In this way you will be prepared when Mark gestures with his hands for you to stand and sing—regardless of how enchanting the minister’s reading is.
- **making appropriate wardrobe choices.** This means having physical modesty in mind and attire without political statements. While this church respects personal expressions, as worship leaders, it is not welcoming to all if politics and agendas are promoted.
- **remaining in your choir loft seat.** Whenever there is movement in the choir loft, it is distracting to others in the service.

After Worship Service

- **Collect all personal belongings.** This includes cups with lids, mislaid Kleenexes and any trash.
- **Return music folder to “choir folder box.”** That box will be between choir loft and copier closet.
- **Return hymnals to bookcases at entrance to sanctuary.** (grey/teal/grey/teal—you’ll see.)
- **Recycle Orders of Service.** The recycling basket is under the table near the entrance to sanctuary.
- **Take time to connect.** Shake hands, hug, fist bump, wave, talk, laugh with as many people you can—especially reaching out to guests, visitors and those you don’t know as well.

making mUUsic
is
faith in action

Choir Covenant

of the

Unitarian Universalist Church of Greensboro

(created by its members on March 24, 2010)

**We, the members of the UUCG choir,
do covenant to:**

- honor our commitment to one another and to our Church with regular presence, attention, and enthusiastic participation,
 - be responsible stewards of our resources,
- support and care for each other with patience in friendship and harmony,
 - listen courteously,
 - give and receive feedback with love,
- respect and value the unique contribution that each member brings, thereby creating a community that shares our gift of music and provides a place where each person can learn and grow
- and where we may rise above the ordinary and experience transcendence.