

Chancel Choir Member's Handbook



FOREWORD

Our church is blessed with a full and rich music and worship ministry. Of the many groups that comprise this ministry and lead weekly in our varied worship styles and venues here at Shalimar United Methodist Church (SUMC), the Chancel Choir is the premier adult choir and serves as the hub of this ministry. It greatly contributes to worship leadership and is flamed by the Holy Spirit. We are blessed with God-given talent and have a heart to share these gifts in a way that honors and exalts our Lord.

With a sense of humility and gratitude, we give our gifts to the One who entrusted them to us. We seek to develop these through the community we call the Chancel Choir. It is an honor to give these back to the Lord and participate with Him in sharing the Good News of His Son, Jesus.

Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow!

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SECTION I-ABOUT THE CHOIR

What the Choir is. The Shalimar United Methodist Church Chancel Choir is a volunteer group of singers whose ministry is worship leadership through music.

- They *lead others* in praise to the glory of God through song.
- They *blend individual talents* into the unity and fullness of the total choir effort.
- They are dedicated and committed to *excellence in the worship experience* for all church members.

The Voices of the Choir. Every member is a voice: A singing voice (SATB), a participating voice in choir functions, a voting voice in choir activities, and a sounding voice in the choir organization. By volunteering to sing in the Chancel Choir, you become a fully participating member of the organization that supports it. As a member, we would like you to:

- Fill out a *new member card*.
- Participate in all the scheduled activities you can.
- Follow the accepted worship practices described in Section 4.
- Use your assigned robe, stole, folder, and hymnal.
- Don't mix music. The librarian(s) number all sheet music and assign it to specific folders.
- After the worship service, leave music in the collection basket, unless instructed otherwise by the librarian.
- When your robe needs cleaning, refer to Section 10.
- Invite your friends to make a similar commitment to leading worship through song.
- Be willing to serve in a leadership position as described in Section 5.



SECTION 2-ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Purpose of this guide. Members of the Shalimar United Methodist Church Chancel Choir prepared this guide for two purposes:

- to *document* the accepted choir policies and procedures
- to quickly *orient* new choir members with choir activities so you can become a living part of our activities

Origin of this Guide. The choir council was established in April 1988. One of its first actions was to build a guide that would document all the informal rules and “word of mouth” practices which had become accepted over the years. The guide has since evolved to include a set of by-laws for the Chancel Choir. This latest version is current as of July 2013.

Changes to this Guide. This guide has value only if it meets your needs. We encourage all members to suggest improvements to this guide. Because this really isn’t a set of by-laws or a rule book, there is no limit to what could be included. If you have a suggestion, pass it to your section leader who will present it to the choir council. Our goal is to update the guide on an annual basis if significant changes are needed. Routine and temporary information will be published in the monthly Chancel Choir Newsletter; *Sound of Shalimar*.



SECTION 3-CHOIR SCHEDULES AND ATTENDANCE

Services. The choir normally sings at each 11:00 am Traditions service. We should be in the choir room at 10:35 to dress, gather music, and be ready for the pre-service rehearsal by 10:40. (Anthems, hymns, and responses are written on the choir white board.) The choir occasionally sings at the 8:00 am Traditions service. The Worship Pastor will announce these occasions well ahead of time.

Rehearsals. The choir normally rehearses each Wednesday night from 7:00 to 8:30 pm. We usually start with a devotional by the Worship Pastor; rehearse as directed by the Worship Pastor, and close with praises and prayers. The Worship Pastor determines the sequence for rehearsing specific pieces. When we are preparing for a special event such as Christmas, Easter, July 4th or Great Night, the Worship Pastor may call extra rehearsals or extend rehearsals with the cooperation of the choir. Child care is always available for rehearsals.

Attendance. Your attendance at choir rehearsals is important. We note attendance for general records and to keep contact with our choir members. Section leaders will count their section at each rehearsal and service. If you don't attend, you will be missed.

Music Program Calendar. Each fall, the choir council publishes a calendar of events for the choir year. Events include performances, special services, and other activities. You will find the calendar useful in making your plans for the year. The calendar is also posted on the Shalimar UMC website.



SECTION 4-WORSHIP GUIDELINES DURING SERVICES

During Worship Services. The Chancel Choir provides worship leadership through song and praise. To this end, all of us in the choir should:

- Smile
- Emote positive feelings
- Present a professional image
- Sing with power and precision
- Maintain reverence

Entering the Choir Loft (front of church). The top row enters from the piano side. Other rows enter alternatively from the organ and piano side. Enter unobtrusively with folders to your side and toward the congregation. Remain standing at your chair until signaled to sit by the Worship Pastor or a designee in the front row. Sit all together.

Standing and Sitting. Usually, we rise and sit all together. As part of the congregation, we stand when they do. As worship leaders, we let the congregation take their cue from our actions. Look for standing/sitting cues from the Worship Pastor, other ministers or front row designee. Choir sections will sit in accordance with the seating chart included within this section.

Use of Folders. For uniformity, always have your folder open when you stand to sing—even if you have the piece memorized. If you're standing and singing, your folders should be open.



Taking Communion. The choir is served ahead of the congregation. To accomplish this most efficiently:

1. We stand as a group. Each person turns to the nearest door.
2. File out the side door closest to you—front row first. Then, out the front door, past the flowers/banners, and to the center communion-rail opening.
3. At the rail, the first to arrive takes the spot nearest the center. Others fill in toward the sidewall of the Sanctuary.
4. Kneel as soon as you arrive (not as a group). If the rail is full, start the waiting line at the side of the sanctuary to be served in the second round.
5. After you take communion and are prayerfully dismissed, return to the choir loft in single file in reverse order. Sit individually.

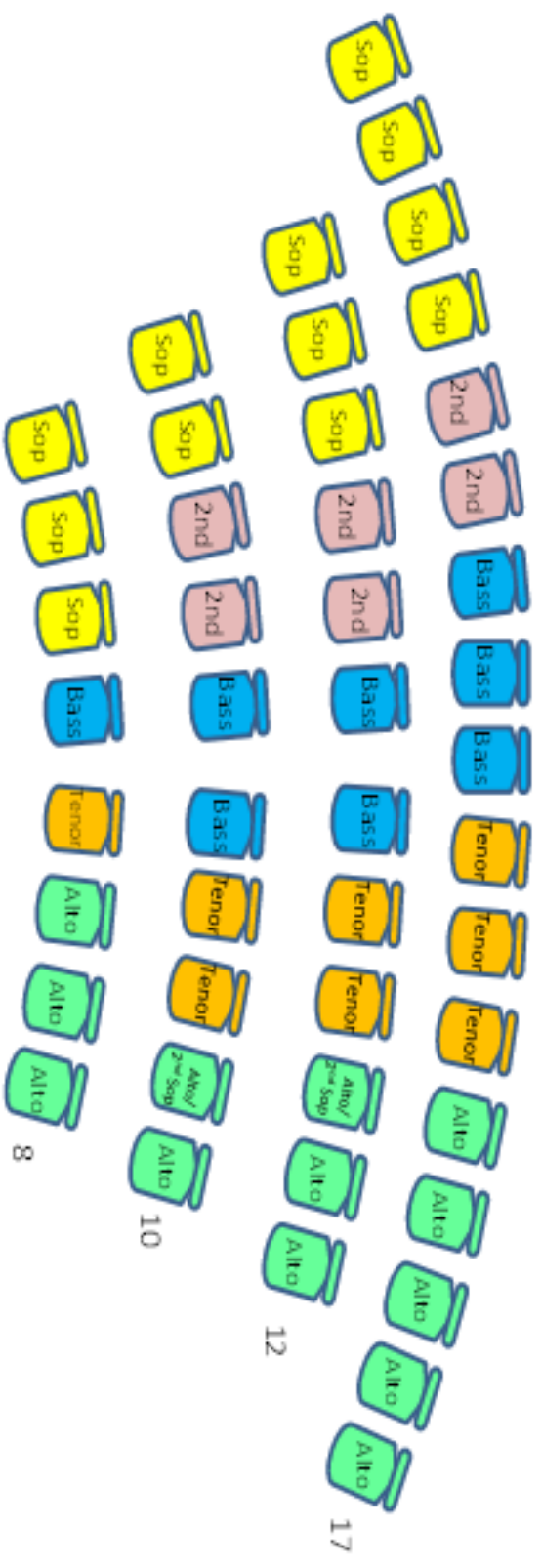
If you wish, you may remove your robe and stole in the side room, exit through the rear doors, and take communion with your family.

Hymns. Sing hymns strongly so the congregation will follow. (See the back cover for the “original instruction.”) Always sing the first verse in unison. Sometimes, the Worship Pastor will ask us to sing the last verse in unison, too.

Processional. On special occasions, we may walk in from the Narthex while singing. We enter from the rear two-by-two. The left line becomes the right of the choir (piano side as seen from the congregation). The right line is the left of the choir (organ side). This must be sorted out and discussed before we leave the Music Suite. Don’t sing until you are in the Sanctuary. Sing the melody while walking through the congregation.

Offerings. The plate is not passed among the choir. If you want your envelope put in the plate, give it to the Worship Pastor before the service. He will put it into the plate during the service. Alternatively, you may place your offering in the special baskets near the piano and organ.

Chancel Choir Seating



Sopranos – 26 (+5)
 Altos – 17 (+2)
 Tenors – 12 (+0)
 Basses – 10 (+2)
Total Members 65 (+9)
 As of Apr 2013

1 st Sopranos	– 12
2 nd Sopranos	– 6
Altos	– 13
Tenors	– 8
Basses	– 8
Normal Seating	47
Special Seating	58 Max

SECTION 5-DUTIES OF SPECIFIC CHOIR OFFICES

Professional Members of the Choir. The church hires these members:

- **Worship Pastor.** This is a professional staff member of the church who coordinates the worship and musical activities of the church. This person directs the Chancel Choir.
- **Organist.** This is a professional staff member of the church who provides organ accompaniment for the Chancel Choir and congregation during worship services.
- **Pianist.** This too, is a professional staff member of the church who provides piano accompaniment for the choir during rehearsals and for the choir and congregation during worship services.

Volunteer Positions in the Choir.

- **Librarian(s).** Know who your librarians are! They assist the Worship Pastor by processing new music and by filing, distributing, and managing the sheet music for our choir folders. A librarian assigns folders to new members. See your librarian if you are missing music.
- **Robe Coordinator.** This person assigns robes to new members, maintains the robe and stole inventory, and arranges for cleaning of stoles as needed.
- **Missions Coordinator.** The Mission Coordinator is responsible to the Choir Council to manage choir mission activities. Duties include:
 - Coordinate choir activities in the community
 - Plan, organize, schedule, and develop mission activities for the choir or choir representative groups (e.g., Men and Women's Ensembles)
 - Keep the Council and Worship Pastor informed of all requested and planned activities
 - Contact and communicate with a variety of outside organizations to provide volunteer services
 - Receive and respond to requests for volunteers

Elected Members of the Choir. The entire membership of the chancel choir elects these members (except for section leaders). Elections are held each September. The normal term of office is January 1 through December 31. See Section 11 for more detail.

President

- Presides over general business meetings
- Motivates all choir officers and committees
- Chairs the executive committee (See Section 6)
- Works closely with the Worship Pastor to plan the yearly choir activities
- Personally contacts any choir member who has missed 5 weeks of choir activities
- In coordination with the Worship Pastor and choir council, approves and affects all changes to choir documentation

Secretary

- Keeps records of choir council meetings
- In coordination with the Worship Pastor, updates and publishes the yearly calendar
- Serves on the executive committee
- Distributes minutes of council meetings and the yearly calendar to choir members
- Prepares a personal welcome letter for new choir members. This letter is signed and sent by the Worship Pastor
- Maintains and updates a roster of all choir members

Treasurer and Sunshine Chairperson

- Maintains the choir fund accountability (This is not the same money which is allocated for the Music Ministry or for memorial funds through the church budget.)
- In coordination with the church accountant, keeps accurate accounts of all fund receipts and disbursements
- Submits incidental bills for payment for authorized choir expenses
- Presents a treasurer's report at each council meeting or general business meeting
- Serves on the executive committee
- Arranges for cards, gifts, and flowers (See Section 8)
- Ensures supply of throat lozenges is available

Logistics Chairperson

- Ensures there is enough seating in the rehearsal room and the choir loft for the singers
- Maintains the choir seating chart (Page 6)
- Plans the choir seating arrangements for each service
- Supervises the arrangement of seats, music stands, and sound equipment for special music programs
- Supervises the moving of equipment for choir events and performances
- Ensures water cooler and supplies (water cups, pencils, etc.) are maintained

Social Chairperson

- Plans the choir's social events, such as: banquets, parties, outings, retreats, etc.
- Promotes good health and happiness among the voices (See Section 8)

Section Leaders. The choir has four section leaders—one for each singing section. They are elected from within each section.

- Asks each new member to fill out a *new member card*. Gives that card to the secretary for inclusion in the choir roster.
- Urges members' attendance at choir rehearsals, services, and social activities
- Speaks for members of the section at the choir council and to the Worship Pastor
- Acts as an information conduit for the Worship Pastor and the choir council, passing the word to the section members by telephone/email
- Takes informal attendance at rehearsals and services. (Reports extended absences to the Worship Pastor and the president.)
- Builds the section roster for printed service programs (Lenten, Patriotic, Christmas services)
- Informs the Worship Pastor and Sunshine Chairman of any illness or hospitalization of a section member
- Maintains a current list of planned absences in the section



SECTION 6-CHOIR BUSINESS ORGANIZATION

Executive Committee. This committee consists of the president, secretary, treasurer, and the Worship Pastor. The executive committee has the following responsibilities:

- Selects *ad hoc* committees (as needed)
- Selects the nominating committee (September)
- Runs elections for the elected positions (each October)
- Makes decisions when there is no time to involve the entire choir council

Choir Council Membership. The choir council consists of the Worship Pastor, the president, the librarian(s), robe coordinator, and all elected members. All these positions are described in Section 5.

Choir Council Duties. In general, the choir council provides administrative, social, and program direction for the chancel choir. Specifically, the council:

- Relieves the administrative and social burden from the Worship Pastor
- Recommends practices and policies for the chancel choir
- Coordinates the yearly calendar for all proposed choir activities (musical and social)

Choir Council Meetings. The choir council normally meets at least quarterly on the second Tuesday of the month at 6:00 PM. In coordination with the Choir Council, meetings can be adjusted to accommodate scheduling conflicts. The president presides over the council meetings and follows basic *Robert's Rules of Order* with reasonable exceptions. Section leaders and other council members may bring up specific areas of concern from their section as new business.

Reports to the Members. The secretary takes minutes at each meeting and distributes them to all council members for review/approval within two weeks of the meeting. After council approval, a copy of the minutes is posted on the choir bulletin board. When the choir council determines an item will require approval by the entire choir, the president will take time at the next choir rehearsal to get a vote. The secretary will record that vote.

SECTION 7-CHOIR SUNSHINE AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Choir Funds. The choir does not make money. The treasurer turns in all funds to be credited to the Chancel Choir Restricted or Designated Fund. The funds come from occasional donations (during rehearsals). The funds are used at the discretion of the choir council, and are for the welfare of the choir membership as detailed in Authorized Expenditures below.

Accountability. The treasurer reports the balance of the “Sunshine Fund” at each council meeting. Since the church accountant manages the fund, any required audits will be commensurate with routine church financial activity/audits.

Authorized Expenditures. The sunshine chairperson uses the fund to purchase gifts for choir members on certain occasions and purchase necessary items for the health and welfare of the choir. The following guidelines are fair and reasonable when used consistently by the sunshine chairperson in coordination with the choir council. The choir council will set dollar limits for these expenditures.

- Births: Card and gift (such as baby spoon or cup)
- Death: Card and either a memorial contribution or a meaningful memorial purchase
- Departing Worship Pastor or organist: To be determined when needed
- Departure: Small personalized gift recognizing a member’s faithful contribution to the church
- Extended illness: Card
- Hospitalization or out-patient surgery: For choir members, a card and flowers/plant. A card for family of choir members.
- Weddings: Card and gift
- Throat lozenges

Social Activities. Periodic parties, retreats, and social events are important to the health of the choir (and to the fun of the members). The social chairman will arrange them as needed or as requested by the choir council. Choir members are encouraged to help plan, to attend, and to donate food or services as needed.

SECTION 8-CHOIR MEMBER RECOGNITION

We get sufficient recognition from the congregation for our participation in the worship services. But, we have two ways to recognize members from within the choir. You'll see two plaques in the music room that we keep current.

Sound of Shalimar Spirit Award. The Spirit Award recognizes a member of the Chancel Choir who has made significant and faithful contributions to the music ministry of the church. It is not awarded for musical contributions. Rather, we recognize service. Service that fosters a spirit of community and commitment. Service that enhances the effectiveness and growth of the music ministry.

Any choir member may nominate someone for a Spirit Award. When a nominee is named, the choir council will deliberate the nomination and decide. If awarded, the choir council will notify the nominator of the result.

An award recipient will find his or her name on the perpetual plaque, and will receive a certificate of appreciation from the choir.

Saints of the Sound. This award is presented as needed. If a member (or old-time ex-member) passes on, he or she will be recognized as a *Saint of the Sound*. The award will be presented to a family member. Notice that the plaque lists the names of our Saints and their date of death.



SECTION 9-CARE OF CHOIR ROBES

Our choir robes are completely washable. You'll find it simple to take care of your assigned robe. However, if you don't feel comfortable doing this yourself, please speak to your section leader or robe coordinator to make other arrangements.

This is the easiest and best way to clean your robe:

1. Take the dirty item home on your assigned numbered hangar. (We track robes by hangar numbers so it's important that you keep your robe with its hangar.)
2. Use any pre-treatment spot remover for those pesky folder dark marks and makeup marks. (*Spray and Wash, Shout*, etc. But no bleach products)
3. Machine wash in cold water on the gentle cycle. Use your favorite non-bleach detergent.
4. Dry for only 5 minutes on a gentle heat. (It will still be damp.)
5. Hang up on a non-metal hangar to complete drying. Straighten out the placket and hem while it's still damp. (Your assigned hangar would be perfect for this step.)
6. Robes will hang out wrinkle-free.
7. Return the clean robe to the choir room and hang it in the right sequence.
8. Shine like an angel in your clean robe during the next service.

SECTION 10-CHOIR COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The annual election process begins in (or near) September of each year with the term of office beginning in January through December. The Worship Pastor or president will announce pending elections to the entire choir to allow individuals interested in serving on the Choir Council an opportunity to let the President and/or Worship Pastor know of their interest.

1. A nomination committee selected by the executive committee will develop a nomination list for all elected positions (except section leaders).
2. Once the list is complete, the secretary will present the names at the next choir rehearsal to obtain the full choir's vote. If only one individual is nominated then the choir votes to approve the nominee.
3. The section leaders will subsequently guide their sections in electing new leaders and then notify the choir council as soon as practical.
4. Both old and new council members will attend the first council meeting in January to facilitate a smooth transition.



CHOIR NOTES

Keep track of your special people, important dates, and choir projects.

DIRECTIONS FOR SINGING

“Sing lustily with good courage. Sing modestly, do not bawl to be heard above the rest of the congregation. Sing in time and be sure to keep with it.

“Above all, sing spiritually. Have an eye on God in every word you sing. Aim at pleasing Him more than yourself.”

John Wesley, 1761

