Christ Church Cathedral

Notes for Visiting Choirs

revised 2020
1. **Introduction**

We are very pleased to welcome visiting choirs to sing the services at Christ Church. As with every cathedral and choral foundation, there is a ‘house style’ which we try to preserve. These notes are intended to help visiting choirs and their directors to navigate our house style, to anticipate the particular character of worship in Oxford’s Cathedral, to plan their visit, and to select appropriate music for the services. The notes are unlikely to be comprehensive – if you have any questions, please do ask Nico Dwyer, the Liturgy Administrator, in the first instance, but you are very welcome to be in touch with Philippa White, the Succentor, for more detailed liturgical guidance.

2. **Arrival**

When you arrive at Christ Church, no more than 15 minutes before your first choir rehearsal, please enter through Tom Gate (see map on p. 15). You will need to explain to the custodians that you are members of the visiting choir and they will direct you to the Cathedral where a verger will welcome you. Lanyards will be available on arrival.

3. **People**

Christ Church has a large number of staff and volunteers, who are all delighted to welcome visiting choirs. Most useful will be the Vergers: a Verger will meet you when you arrive and talk through the details of rehearsal space and services. Should you need any help while you are at Christ Church, your first port of call should be the Vergers. Their office is in the Sacristy, accessed via a staircase from the South Transept (near the font).

One of the Clergy should also meet you during your first day; either when you arrive, during your rehearsal or before the service. In most cases, this will be the Succentor or Diocesan Canon Precentor (Grant Bayliss), who is also likely to be the officiant for the service (leading all spoken parts and acting as cantor for preces and responses). During the service, either the Dean or the Canon in Residence will read Scripture, lead prayers and bless at the end.

You will already have had contact with our Liturgy Administrator. She will
always be happy to help (tel 276 246), but she only works in the mornings, so if a question arises once you have arrived at Christ Church, please speak in the first instance to the Vergers.

4. Services

Detailed outlines of each service follows, and choirs will receive a sample service booklet for each service. In general, however, please note that the choir lines up in the South Transept five minutes before the service starts, and following a vestry prayer processes in to the choir stalls. The entry procession is part of the service and sets the tone; please ensure that you are able to process reverently (but not too slowly!) If, for whatever reason, your choir will not be able to process, please discuss this with the Liturgy Administrator when making arrangements for your visit. During the service, please stand to sing and otherwise sit, kneel and stand with the congregation as instructed. The congregation often uses the choir’s movement as a cue for their own, so please do check the instructions in the service sheet so that you can move confidently.

5. Weekday Choral Evensong – 6.05pm

Evensong is sung (almost) daily at Christ Church and follows the pattern in the Book of Common Prayer (1662). The only exceptions are Mondays out of term, and Thursdays, when a Choral Eucharist is celebrated at 6.05pm. However, visiting choirs are most welcome to sing on Mondays when the Christ Church choirs are out of residence. The service should be over by 7pm at the latest.

a. Rehearsal
The Cathedral is closed from 5pm (last entry 4.45pm) to enable undisturbed rehearsal. If your choir requires more time, extra rehearsal must be booked in advance with the Liturgy Administrator.

b. After Rehearsal
The Priory Room or the Slype will be reserved for robing and the secure storage of belongings.
c. **Outline of Service**
The organist begins playing by 5.57pm. The choir assembles in the South Transept by 6.02pm. The officiant leads a vestry prayer. The choir then processes into the choir stalls via the south aisle and under the organ loft.

On entering the choir stalls from the west end, remain facing east and bow with the officiant and conductor. The organist concludes playing when the Chapter have all entered their stalls (follow their movements on the CCTV). The officiant welcomes the congregation. After the welcome, the organist gives a cue note to the officiant or cantor for the Opening Versicles and Responses.

Remain standing for the **Opening Versicles and Responses** (the congregation remains standing).

**The Psalm(s)** are announced by the officiant, and the congregation is invited to sit. The congregation is not expected to join in the singing of the psalm.

**First reading** (choir sits). At the end of the first reading, the choir stands for:

**The Magnificat** (not announced).

**Second reading** (choir sits). At the end of the second reading, the choir stands for:

**The Nunc Dimittis** (not announced).

Remain standing and face east to say the **Apostles’ Creed** (sometimes announced and always begun by the officiant).

**Lesser Litany** (Congregation kneels) The organist gives a cue note for the officiant or cantor.

**Preces and Responses.**

**Three Collects**, including the Collect of the Day (sung by the officiant or cantor to a single note), four collects in Advent and Lent.
Anthem (usually announced).

Prayers (led by the Canon in Residence, usually concluding with the Grace).

Hymn

Blessing

Turn with the officiant to face the Canon in Residence for the Blessing. After the Amen, the organist begins playing and the choir bows with the Canon in Residence, conductor and officiant. They turn and process out of the stalls from the west end back to south transept.

Line up in south transept for vestry prayer.

It is Christ Church custom to sing introits or closing motets on major feast days only. These should be explicitly agreed with the Diocesan Canon Precentor or Succentor in advance.

6. Festal Evensong

On days of particular importance in the Church’s calendar (Principal Feasts and Festivals, those printed in red in the Common Worship calendar) it is Christ Church custom for Evensong to be Festal. If the choir is willing to sing an appropriate introit, this is preferred; otherwise there is an opening hymn before the Versicles and Responses, as on Saturdays. If possible, the choir should sing an Antiphon to the Magnificat. During the Magnificat, the altar and congregation may be censed. If any Evensong during your visit will be festal, you will be notified by the Liturgy Office.

7. Saturday Choral Evensong – 6.05pm

The service is exactly as for Evensong on Weekdays apart from a Hymn after the Welcome, after which the Versicles follow without announcement.
8. **Weekday Choral Eucharist, Thursdays – 6.05pm**

The service follows the pattern in *Common Worship* (Order One, in contemporary language).

a. **Rehearsal**  
The cathedral is closed from 5pm (last entry 4.45pm) to enable undisturbed rehearsal. If your choir requires more time, extra rehearsal must be booked in advance with the Liturgy Administrator.

b. **Outline of Service**

The organist begins to play by 5.57pm. The choir assembles in the south transept by 6.02pm. The Deacon leads a vestry prayer. The choir then processes into the choir stalls via the south aisle and under the organ loft.

On entering the choir stalls from the west end remain facing east and bow with the conductor.

The president begins the service from the chancel step.

The choir sings *Kyrie, Gloria* (except in Lent or Advent), *Sanctus, Benedictus* and *Agnus Dei*. The *Creed* is usually omitted but will be said on principal Festival days. An offertory hymn is announced and sung. The choir sings the *Agnus Dei* immediately after the invitation to communion. A communion anthem may be sung after the choir have received Communion, but should be omitted if Communion has finished.

After the Blessing and Dismissal the organist begins to play as the choir returns to the south transept for the vestry prayer.

9. **Sunday Choral Matins – 9.50am**

The service follows an abbreviated version of that in the *Book of Common Prayer* (1662). The congregation follows the service as printed, beginning at the Opening Versicles and Responses. Directors of Music should be aware of the pressure of time on Sunday Matins. The service must finish by 10.45am, and to allow time for the sermon and prayers the sung portion
of the service should finish by 10.20am. It is usually better to sing one canticle to a setting, and the other to a simple chant.

a. Outline of Service
The organist begins to play by 9.42am. The choir assembles in the south transept by 9.47am. The officiant leads a vestry prayer. The choir then processes into the choir stalls via the south aisle and under the organ loft.

On entering the choir stalls from the west end remain facing east and bow with the conductor. The organist concludes playing when the Chapter have all entered their stalls (follow their movements on the CCTV).

The officiant reads a sentence from scripture, then the organist gives a cue note for the officiant or cantor.

Remain standing for the Opening Versicles and Responses (the congregation remains standing).

The Venite (or Easter Anthems during Eastertide) is usually sung by choir and congregation together to Anglican Chant, which the Liturgy Office will provide.

The officiant welcomes the congregation.

The Psalm is announced by the officiant. The congregation sits and is not expected to join in the singing of the psalm.

First reading (choir sits). At the end of the first reading, the choir stands for:

Te Deum (or Benedictus during Advent, Psalm 51 during Lent): not announced, and usually sung to a canticle setting or to chant.

Second reading (choir sits). At the end of the second reading, the choir stands for:

The Jubilate (or Benedictus where requested by the Liturgy Office) is not announced, and is usually sung to chant if the Te Deum or Benedictic has been sung to a setting.
Remain standing and face east to say the Apostles’ Creed (begun by the officiant).

**Lesser Litany** (Congregation kneels) The organist gives a cue note for the officiant or cantor.

**Preces and Responses**

**Three Collects,** including the Collect of the Day (sung by Cantor), four collects in Advent and Lent.

**NB.** There is NO anthem sung at Matins.

**First Hymn** (announced)

**Sermon**

**Second Hymn** (announced)

**Prayers** (led by the Canon in Residence or the Dean, usually concluding with the Grace).

At the end, stand with the officiant. The organist begins playing. The choir faces east and bows with the conductor. Turn and process out of the stalls from the west end back to the South Transept.

Line up in the South Transept for the vestry prayer.

Due to time pressures neither an introit nor closing motets are sung at Matins.

**b. After Matins**

The Priory Room is used for coffee between Matins and Choral Eucharist, and so we ask that choirs keep belongings to the far side of the room. Visiting choirs are most welcome to attend.
10. **Sunday Choral Eucharist – 11.05am**

The service follows the pattern from *Common Worship* (Order 1 – contemporary language).

The choir sings **Kyries, Gloria** (omitted in Advent and Lent), **Sanctus**, **Benedictus** and **Agnus Dei**. The **Creed** is said. The ordinary of the mass is usually sung in Latin (Greek for the Kyries, of course), although it may, on occasion, be sung in English, or another language.

a. **Rehearsal**
There is no rehearsal time on Sunday morning. There is usually only enough time between the end of Matins and the beginning of the Eucharist to drink a quick cup of tea. Do not count on being able to rehearse anything at that point!

b. **Outline of Service**
Silence is kept before the service. The Deacon welcomes the congregation at about 11am and then returns to the south transept where the choir assembles and leads them in a vestry prayer at 11.03am.

At 11.05am by the clock, the organist begins the playover for the first hymn (unannounced). The servers begin the procession in as the playover begins, and the choir follow servers in procession. Please make sure you have taken your hymn books with you so that you are able to sing in procession. On entering the choir stalls from the west end, remain facing east and bow with the conductor, and continue to lead the congregation in the first hymn.

The choir remains standing when the congregation kneels for the Prayers of Penitence. The Kyries precede the Absolution. Following the Absolution, the congregation stands with the choir and a choir cantor begins **Gloria in Excelsis Deo**.

There are two readings before the Gospel. After the **First Reading**, the choir sings the **Psalm** (CW lectionary and psalter) appointed for the day (this may be to Anglican chant, plain-chant, or responsorially by cantor and choir). After the **Second Reading**, the choir sings an **Alleluia** (or, in Lent, ‘Praise to you, O Christ, king of eternal glory.’). You are welcome to
sing the Alleluia you normally sing, or the Liturgy Office can provide one.

After the Gospel is concluded, the organist plays a “Gospel Fanfare”, which should match the tone of the reading, until the altar party returns to the sanctuary. The organist concludes playing when the preacher reaches the crossing lectern.

After the Sermon a period of silence is kept and the choir stands with the President to say the Creed. The choir kneels for the Intercessions and stands for the Peace.

After the Peace, the Deacon announces the Offertory Hymn.

The Sursum Corda may be said or sung, according to the preference of the President. The Director of Music should check with the vergers.

The choir sings Sanctus and Benedictus immediately following the preface. If the Benedictus is particularly long it may be sung as a communion anthem in addition to the Agnus Dei or omitted entirely. The Director of Music should discuss in advance with the Diocesan Canon Precentor or the Succentor and confirm with the clergy before the service.

After the Invitation to Communion, the choir sings Agnus Dei, during which the altar party and congregation begin to receive communion followed immediately by an Anthem. The choir receives Communion as directed by the sidesmen; the organist should play quietly for the remainder of communion, stopping once the president has returned to the centre of the altar.

Immediately following the Post Communion Prayer, the Deacon announces the Final Hymn. At the end of the hymn, the President gives the Blessing and the Deacon the Dismissal from the sanctuary. The organist begins the Voluntary immediately.

The choir waits for the servers and processes out of their stalls, after the servers and before the clergy, and returns to the south transept for the vestry prayer.
11. **Sunday Choral Evensong – 6.05pm**

The service largely follows the pattern for Choral Evensong on Weekdays, with three main differences:

a. There is an opening hymn as on Saturdays.

b. After the first hymn the officiant leads a confession and absolution before continuing with the Opening Versicles and Responses (the organist should give a cue note to the officiant or cantor).

c. Shorter psalmody (from the *Common Worship* Second Service Lectionary) is used.

12. **Health and Safety**

We will need any PLI, Risk assessments and method statements, and/or safeguarding policies for your choir. This is imperative if you have any choir members with mobility issues or under the age of 18. Please send all details to the Liturgy Administrator.

13. **General Notes**

a. **Organists**

Unless arranged otherwise, visiting choirs are expected to provide their own organist. The Cathedral is not usually able to book organists in the summer months, especially at short notice. If it is likely (or even unlikely) that a visiting choir will lose their organist between arranging to come to Christ Church and their residency, then we ask the choir to have an unaccompanied repertoire that can be sung at short notice. We are happier to announce a change in music in a service than to attempt to arrange an organist dep. Organists are expected to play from 8 minutes before the service, and to play a voluntary afterwards.

*The following notes on the organ are contributed by David Goode, former Sub-Organist:*

We hope you enjoy playing our fine Rieger organ. Please treat it carefully, in
particular the very sensitive action. During the day, we ask you to restrain your practice to **flutes only**. Should you urgently need more volume (for example, before a choir practice) please check with a verger. They may also be able to arrange evening practice.

The organ is very loud in the building. For hymns and choral accompaniment, the maximum needed is:

- **Gt.** 16 8 8 4 4 (2) Ch. 8 8 4 4 (2) Full Sw. Ped. 16 16 8 8 4
- *with perhaps the Gt. VI Fourniture or Ped. 16 Reed for a large congregation.*

Please avoid Full Organ even in voluntaries. Broadly speaking, if you cannot hear the choir, you are accompanying too loud. You can often use more Swell than you think, but less of everything else!

**b. Calendar**

The Cathedral uses the Common Worship calendar, with a few local variations. Sundays follow the Church of England *Common Worship Lectionary* and readings and psalms are taken from this lectionary, or a special Matins lectionary. The readings at weekday Evensongs mostly follow the new ‘Pillar Lectionary’. The collects for Matins and Evensong are taken from the *Book of Common Prayer*. The Liturgy Office will provide a list of feasts, commemorations, readings and psalmody for your visit.

**c. Choice of Music**

It is important that the music sung in Christ Church should be worthy of the worship of God. It should be sung well, chosen thoughtfully in accordance with the liturgical season, and fit the length of the service.

Please send details of all proposed music to the Liturgy Office in good time, for approval by either the Diocesan Canon Precentor or the Succentor. It is important to note anything non-standard, eg. a different Lord’s Prayer setting, and to be sure to use the words of the 1662 BCP in preces, responses and canticles in English.

The Liturgy Office should be informed of the choice of music two months before the engagement. This will enable the Cathedral both to incorporate the choices in our published music lists, and to discuss any suggested alterations.
d. **Psalter**
At Evensong on weekdays, the psalm(s) for the day, according to the rules of the *Book of Common Prayer*, are sung. Sometimes these psalms are superseded by the proper psalms for Feast Days, and certain days when Commemorative Evensongs may be kept. Psalm 109, on the twenty-second evening is omitted. The Psalms for the 30th and 31st evenings may be split 147-148 and 149-150. Psalms will be confirmed by the Liturgy Administrator.

Where a Director of Music feels that the psalmody appointed for the evening is too long, they are welcome to discuss abridging it with the Succentor, via the Liturgy Administrator.

On Sundays and some feast days, the psalms from the Church of England *Common Worship* lectionaries or the Christ Church Matins lectionary are used. Psalmody will be confirmed by the Liturgy Office.

e. **Hymns**
The Liturgy Office makes the choice of hymns, generally taken from *Common Praise* (2000). The choice of hymns is published in the Cathedral's music list, and will include verse omissions and alternative tunes. The detailed descriptions of the services show where and when hymns are sung in the services:

f. **Cantors**
The officiant at Choral Matins and Choral Evensong, in general, will cantor the Preces and Responses. Occasionally a choir will need to provide its own cantor. Details of the officiant will be communicated at least a month in advance; where the member of clergy is going to cantor the service please inform them of the setting as soon as possible.

g. **Dress**
It is the custom in Christ Church for choirs and directors of music to dress in “choir dress”, that is, cassock and surplice, without academic hoods. Visiting choirs are welcome to use their own custom if they wish.

h. **Cathedral Time**
By long custom, the Cathedral keeps local time (‘Oxford Time’). Services start five minutes “late”. Processions for services should set off from
the south transept at “three minutes past”, so that the service may begin exactly at “five minutes past” the advertised hour. However, to avoid confusion, in this document all timings are according to GMT/BST.

i. Parking
Parking in Oxford is very difficult, and not possible at Christ Church. It is usually best to avoid bringing private vehicles into the town centre. If this cannot be avoided, then the nearest public parking is Westgate or Oxpens car park. Cheaper parking can be found using the excellent park and ride scheme, with frequent buses to the town centre. If travelling by coach, then the coach is able to drop off at the Norfolk Street coach stop.

For Oxford City Council advice on travelling into the city, see: www.oxford.gov.uk/info/20012/parking_and_travel

j. Accommodation
Whilst Christ Church Cathedral is unable to arrange or pay for accommodation in Oxford, Christ Church College may be able to accommodate visiting choirs. Early booking is essential as the College is almost always full out of term time with conferences. Directors of Music should contact the Conferences Manager

Haley Wiggins
Christ Church
Oxford OX1 1DP
Tel: 01865 286 877 (+44 1865 286 877 from overseas)
Email: conferenceoffice@chch.ox.ac.uk

Otherwise, Oxford is well supplied with hotels and guest houses. The Oxford Visitor Information Centre can give accommodation lists.

Oxford Visitor Information Centre
15-16 Broad Street
Oxford OX1 3AS
Tel: 01865 686 430 (+44 1865 686 430 from overseas)
www.experienceoxfordshire.org
Alternatively, Oxford Rooms offers bed and breakfast accommodation in Oxford colleges:
www.oxfordrooms.co.uk

k. Plan of Christ Church


Liturgy Office Contact Details

The primary email contact for all visiting choirs is visitingchoirs@chch.ox.ac.uk

Liturgy Office 01865 276 246 (or from overseas +44 1865 276 246)
Vergers’ Office 01865 276 154 (or from overseas +44 1865 276 154)

Diocesan Canon Precentor
*Chapter member with overall responsibility for worship in the Cathedral*
Revd Canon Dr Grant Bayliss grant.bayliss@chch.ox.ac.uk

Succentor
Revd Philippa White philippa.white@chch.ox.ac.uk

Liturgy Administrator
Mrs Nico Dwyer visitingchoirs@chch.ox.ac.uk