

CHOIR HANDBOOK



Conductor:

Carolyn Neumann VanderBurgh
imcc.conductor@rogers.com

Accompanist:

Christine Klaver-Schmidt

Please keep this Handbook as a reference throughout the year.

Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir Handbook

History

Choir History:

From the beginning, the Inter Mennonite Children's Choir has been rooted in the Mennonite faith tradition. Under the leadership of Dr. Helen Martens, of Conrad Grebel College, children from various Mennonite churches and other churches were drawn together to learn to sing the best sacred music with precision, skill and understanding. In 1974, the choir won the top prize in the CBC National Radio Competition for Amateur Choirs. Other former conductors include: Jane Schultz-Janzen, Lisa Shuh, Deb Jones, Karen Bileski and Judith Bean. In 1987, Lisa Shuh introduced the Harriet Ziegenhals song "You Shall Have a Song" to the Choir and since that time, it has become a tradition to invite alumni in the audience to join the Choir and close the Spring concert with that song.

Over the last 40 years, the choir released several recordings, sharing their music with the community. *Be Ye Joyful* was the choir's first recording and was recorded at Conrad Grebel College with the help of a grant from the "International Year of the Child" in 1979. Other recordings include *Sing to the Lord a Song* (1992), *Sing for Joy* (1994), *You Shall Have A Song* (1997), *We Are The Children* (2002), and *Joyful Celebration* (2007). As well, IMCC is featured on a CD, *Cloths of Heaven* (2009), produced by the Menno Singers family of choirs.

Choir trips have included destinations in Canada, including Ottawa in 1972, where the choir met then Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau. In 1975, the choir made the first of several tours to the Pennsylvania area and were billeted at the homes of local Mennonite church families. Other trips include: Europe (1980), Winnipeg (1994), Vancouver (1997), Ottawa (1997) and Lancaster County PA (2001). In 2002, the Lancaster Mennonite Children's Choir visited Waterloo Region and both choirs presented a concert titled "You Shall Have A Song." Recent overnight trips in the spring have taken the choir to Leamington, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Toronto and Collingwood.

The choir has also participated in various musical events throughout the region. In 1995, the choir participated in the competition finals for the production of Joseph's Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat. Choral festivals and competitions include: The Ontario Vocal Festival (1997-2001), National MusicFest (1997-Gold Standing) Kitchener-Waterloo Kiwanis Music Festival (2002 and 2007). Members of the choir were thrilled to perform Monteverdi's *Sancta Maria* with the K-W Symphony in February of 2010.

Inevitably, over the past 45 years the Inter-Mennonite Children's Choir has influenced the musical development of many singers in Waterloo Region. Some have gone on to other communities, continuing the spirit of community singing they experienced in their early years in the Choir. Others have become professional musicians. Sustaining the musical and spiritual vision with which it started, the choir hopes to continue sharing the love of singing and music with our community for many more years to come.

Philosophy and Mission Statement

The philosophy of the choir is "to give children a chance to be trained in singing and to learn to read music, using repertoire from our Christian heritage, including spiritual, classical, folk and multicultural sources." The choir also strives to include Canadian content in its repertoire.

Structure

IMCC is made up of a training choir, a concert choir, two mass choirs and a small ensemble. Each season, returning choristers are re-auditioned to determine their placement based on their musical development. Their placement is not necessarily determined by age or number of years in the choir.

Training Choir

This is a non-auditioned group for singers between the ages of 6-9. The purpose of the Training Choir is to begin to develop good choral habits and focus on pitch matching skills. Uncertain singers will have the opportunity to develop confidence in their pitch matching abilities and vocal skills through unison repertoire and sequential musical training.

Concert Choir

This group is for auditioned singers who have learned to maintain a consistent singing tone, match pitches quickly, and who have developed a good tonal memory. Singers in this group will sing with both the Training Choir and the Small Ensemble, and may sing some repertoire on their own.

Small Ensemble

This group is for older singers whose tone and tuning is secure, who demonstrate some sight singing ability, and who are able to maintain their own voice part. Their repertoire will focus more on a capella singing and more difficult three and four part pieces. Most children in this group are aged 12 and up. Audition requirements include part-singing and sight-reading.

Consistent, at home practice will be required.

Auditions (this does not apply to the training choir)

Entrance Requirements:

- Approximately grades 4 and up
- Successful completion of an audition, which will include solo singing, a demonstration of proper vocal range, pitch matching, rhythm clapping, etc.
- Agreement to follow guidelines and home practice schedule

Entrance into the choir is dependent on a selective audition to determine placement and readiness for the choir. Each year current members of the choir are re-auditioned. This gives the director an opportunity to assess individual chorister's commitment to the choir, attendance, attitude, conduct at rehearsal, overall contribution to the choir, and musical progress.

Expectations of Choristers

1. Behaviour Expectations

As with any organization, the behaviour of its members reflects either positively or negatively on IMCC's reputation. It is expected that all members of the choir conduct themselves in a manner that best represents the choir at all times. This includes rehearsals, concerts and any public function the choir is involved in. The following guidelines outline behaviour expectations:

- a) No gum, candy, or food (especially with nuts) at any rehearsals or concerts

- b) Please remember to bring a water bottle to all rehearsals.
- c) Arrive 10 minutes prior to events in order to ensure promptness.
- d) Please leave outdoor footwear at entrance and bring **non-marking shoes** for rehearsals.
- e) Always bring necessary materials (music, pencil, etc.)
- f) Care for the music (no unnecessary marks or rolled music)
- g) Be respectful of others (conductor, parents, other choristers, etc.)
- h) **Choristers are expected to stay in the gym during break time and are not allowed in other areas of the church.**

Singers who fail to adhere to the behaviour expectations of the choir will receive a warning from the conductor followed by a phone call home. All behaviour incidences will be recorded and a chorister may be asked to leave the choir if the behaviour does not improve.

This facility is a gift to IMCC by the WKUMC congregation.

** Parents please ensure that younger siblings are supervised while they are waiting during the Mass II and Small Ensemble rehearsals. The conductor and/or parent supervisors on duty are not responsible for singers have already finished rehearsing for the evening.*

2. Attendance - The Conductor needs to be advised of ALL absences.

Training Choir	6:00 – 6:30	(training choir singers only)
Mass I	6:30 – 7:00	(training choir with concert choir)
Mass II	7:15 – 8:00	(concert choir with small ensemble)
Small Ensemble	8:00 – 8:30	(small ensemble singers only)

(Attendance continued)

- ❑ Rehearsals are held every Tuesday and choristers are to arrive 10 minutes before the rehearsal begins unless otherwise instructed. The 10 minutes prior to rehearsal allows the chorister to register with the rehearsal assistant, find their nametag, return completed forms and pick up new music as required.
- ❑ Attendance will be monitored by the rehearsal assistants. It is important that your child check in so that we are sure about who is present and who is absent in the case of an emergency. Singers absent from choir rehearsal without notifying the conductor ahead of time will receive a call from a parent supervisor.
- ❑ Changes to arrival times will be posted in the Choir Notes. Regular attendance will ensure the continual success and musical development of the choir as a whole and each member is an important part of the whole. It is imperative that **ALL** choristers attend **ALL** rehearsals and performances. If you are aware of an upcoming absence, please bring in a note and give it to the conductor. The absence will be noted in the attendance book. Unplanned absenteeism can jeopardize the performance of selected repertoire.

- ❑ If a chorister misses TWO or MORE rehearsals in a term (i.e. September – December or January – May) the chorister may be asked to not sing in the concert due to lack of preparation. Choristers may also be asked to re-audition to maintain their place in the choir.
- ❑ **Attendance at Dress Rehearsals and Concerts is mandatory.** Singers not in attendance at the Dress Rehearsal may be asked not to sing at the concert. Please mark the dates of these events on your calendar.

3. Music

All music is purchased by the choir and is a big investment. Music should be cared for, not soiled by food or markings, and must be returned in good condition. Please be very careful handling your music. A bag to carry your music will be provided. You will be responsible to replace lost pieces of music. The bag is also the property of IMCC and must be returned at the end of the season in good order.

4. Concerts

- ❑ IMCC participates annually in a Christmas and Spring Concert. At these events, choristers are expected to arrive in full uniform. Choristers are also asked to ensure that long hair is away from their face so that it doesn't interfere with their singing. They should be prepared to be present at a concert venue up to one hour before the performance time.
- ❑ Any chorister may be asked to sit out of a concert if the conductor feels that chorister is not ready to perform. Absenteeism, lateness, not having music at rehearsals can all affect a child's readiness to perform.
- ❑ Any chorister who misses the dress rehearsal prior to a concert, may not be allowed to participate in that concert.
- ❑ The first term music is collected at the Christmas dress rehearsal to be replaced with Spring repertoire over the holidays. Please ensure that your music folders are at the dress rehearsal. Second term music is collected at the spring dress rehearsal.

5. Home Practice

- ❑ Working on music at home reinforces what has been learned at rehearsal and quickens the learning of both notes and words. It also helps the voice and ear to develop more quickly than is possible with just one rehearsal a week. The conductor will prepare a practice CD for choristers. These should be used with the music to improve music reading and musical accuracy.
- ❑ All music will be memorized for performances and should be memorized as early as possible in the fall and spring.

Expectations of Parents

I. Parent Supervisors

A number of families are responsible for rehearsal supervision each week. The following is a list of duties:

- ❑ Parents are expected to arrive 10-15 minutes early and attend the rehearsal during their scheduled time.
- ❑ Parents are needed to set up the chairs at the beginning of the evening and stack the chairs after the Mass II rehearsal

- ❑ Supervising parents are to assist the conductor as needed by ensuring that the choristers are attentive and not talking.
- ❑ Younger children will need help getting their music out.
- ❑ Be prepared to help with attendance, collect money or forms and assist with hand-outs.
- ❑ **One parent should lock and monitor the entrance door during the whole rehearsal time.**
- ❑ Closely supervise break time (7:00 - 7:15). Choristers must stay in the gym unless going to the washroom
- ❑ Washrooms also need to be monitored during the break.
- ❑ At the end of rehearsal all lights must be out, bathrooms checked, and practice areas free of any loose paper, marks on floors, garbage etc.
- ❑ Supervise and assist the children in stacking the chairs.
- ❑ Stay until all children have been picked up.

If you are unable to supervise at your scheduled time, it is your responsibility to find an alternate. A chorister phone list is provided at the back of this handbook.

II. Parent Committee

The parent committee handles the administrative tasks of the choir and meets 3-4 times a year. Your concerns and/or affirmations are always welcome and can be directed to any member of the committee listed on the bottom of the choir notes. The Executive Board of the Parent Committee is made up of the chairperson, secretary, treasurer and choir director. As well, additional members are always welcome!

III. Receptions

A finger food reception is held for the family and friends of choristers immediately following the Christmas and Spring Concert. This reception will take place in the fellowship hall of the church where the choir performed. Each family is expected to contribute a generous plate of finger food for each reception. Additional help will be required for set-up, serving and clean up. Please see Choir Notes for further explanation closer to the concerts.

IV. Volunteer Job Descriptions

In order for the choir to be successful, parent volunteers are needed to complete some additional tasks. Please consider carefully where you might be able to help in this organization. Below is a general list of the jobs for the choir season.

Publicity

- Prepare a press release for IMCC concerts and special events
- Promote IMCC events throughout the community

Ticket Committee

- Distribute tickets for each event as needed
- Collect money and extras
- Organize the ticket table at the concerts (include a float)

Registrar

- collect registration forms
- schedule audition times
- generate an information list (name, address, phone number, email list)
- collate health form binder

Programs

- edit and proof-read program (ensure each singer is listed and all thank-yous are included)
- ensure programs are at the concert and distributed to audience members
- assign ushers to hand program out

Receptions/Food

- organize parents for concert receptions
- buy and prepare food for Fun Days and Special events

Copyright

- collect list of songs sung during the year
- contact copyright companies and arrange for payment

Uniforms

- bring and collect red pin on flowers for Christmas and Spring concerts
- ensure that there are extra pairs of black tights for each formal concert
- ensure that all singers have a T-shirts for casual events

Spring Tour Committee

- decide on a location
- organize concerts venues and special events
- present information to parents

Extra Rehearsals

During the year, special events **may be held** or extra practices called in order to help the choir develop positive relationships with each other, and to have some extra time to learn the required music. These events may not happen every year.

Uniforms

Choir uniforms are determined before the beginning of the season in consultation with the conductor and parents' committee. There are no exceptions to our choir uniform. Running shoes (even black) and black jeans are expressly prohibited.

	Top	Bottom		Shoes
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Girls	long or ¾ sleeved white blouse	black skirt (below the knees)	black panty hose	black dress shoes
Boys	long-sleeved white dress shirt	black dress pants	black socks	black dress shoes

Communication

Choir Notes

In order to ensure good communication within the organization, it is **ESSENTIAL** that parents and choristers read the CHOIR NOTES, which will be sent via email each Wednesday to the address provided on the registration form. Since these provide valuable present and future information they should be read by both the parents and the choristers and then kept for future reference. There will also be a chalkboard in the church foyer with the most up to date information each week. Please bring your children into the church each week to read these notes.

Season Schedule

A schedule for the entire year's events will be distributed to each choir member at the beginning of the choir year. Please mark all of the dates on your calendar. Any new information will be found in the CHOIR NOTES. Every effort has been made to ensure that the dates and times are correct, but due to unforeseen circumstances, some changes may occur. We will give you as much warning as possible so that families can arrange their schedules. Your flexibility and understanding is much appreciated.

Cancellations

In the event that a rehearsal must be cancelled due to inclement weather or otherwise, an email will be sent out by 4:30 pm to all choristers. In cases of severe weather, please use common sense and ensure that safety is a priority.

Emergency Procedures

The choir is in the process of developing procedures in case of an emergency. It is extremely important that parents who are on supervision duty ensure that they are present for supervision.

To call police, ambulance, or fire:

- Phone is located in the hallway on the other side of the library
- Dial 911
- Request: police, ambulance, or fire
- "My name is _____ I am calling from W-K United Mennonite Church, which is located 15 George Street. Our phone number is (519) 578-0660."
- "We have: (describe the situation)."
- Stay on the line to report any further information
- Send someone to meet the emergency vehicle and direct them to the scene

In the case of a fire:

- Whoever discovers the fire is to pull the nearest fire alarm

- The parent supervising the door determines which is the best exit depending on the location of the fire, directs the choristers to the door and holds it open until all have exited
- The parent supervising downstairs or in the gym checks the washrooms for singers and closes doors and windows
- Students follow the conductor to the safest exit and line up far from the building
- Choral scholars bring attendance outside and give to conductor to ensure that everyone is accounted for once everyone is outside

(Emergency Procedures continued)

Designated Downstairs Exits:

- a) Out the back door by the washrooms behind the organ in the church proper
- b) Up the stairs and out the front or back main entrances in the centre of the building

Designated Gym Exits:

- a) Out the exits in the gym
- b) Out the front or back main entrances in the centre of the building

Tornado or Inclement Weather:

In the case of a tornado:

- Children follow the conductor in a single line to the designated area
- Parents supervising help the conductor get the children into a safe area
- Choral Scholars give attendance to conductor to make sure everyone is accounted for
- Parents in the building help make sure:
 - Windows, drapes and outside doors on the side of the building from which the tornado is approaching is closed
 - Windows and outside doors on the side of the building opposite to the approaching tornado should be opened
 - All inside doors leading into corridors must be left open
 - Keep children away from glass

Intruders:

When approaching an intruder in a crisis situation:

- Slow down, walk to the scene
- Remain calm and in control
- Be polite
- Be direct in your questions and instruction
- Try to defuse the situation
- Use your sense of humour, if appropriate
- Be concerned for the care, welfare and safety of all the people involved
- Give the intruder specific options
- Allow the intruder to leave, if appropriate

If an intruder arrives in your area:

- Approach the intruder and politely ask the intruder what their purpose is in the church
- Check the whiteboard in the front hall for the listing of any church meetings occurring
- Prevent the intruder from entering the rehearsal areas
- Discreetly note any identifying features, appearance, the departing direction, etc.
- Use the phone in the church hallway to contact the police if necessary